THE ® # saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

AUGUST

35c

Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

IN THIS ISSUE

MANNING COLES

FREDRIC BROWN

BAYNARD KENDRICK

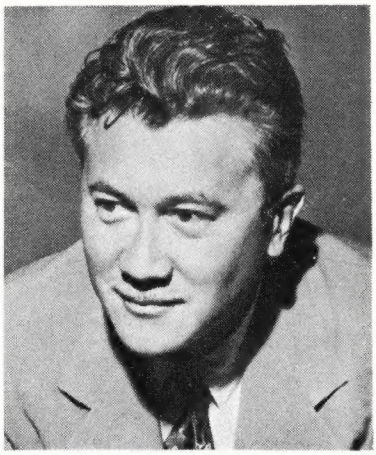
MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD

LESLIE CHARTERIS

deadly joker

A New Story by ROBERT BLOCH

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION



As most readers of the Saint must have realized by this time, I do a lot of traveling. Even as I write this, my next departure is starting to loom up on the calendar; and when you read it, thanks to the time-lag of magazine publishing, I shall probably be getting set for the return trip. And grumbling in advance, as I always do, about the technical nuisances inflicted on every voyager.

Don't misunderstand me: I love to travel. And I fully appreciate all the mechanical efficiencies and comforts which have been added to it even in my lifetime, let alone since the days of the windjammer and the stage-coach. I only wish that they had been matched by equal strides in the elimination of bureaucratic nuisances, such as Passports and Customs.

It may be hard for the modern individual, raised from childhood in a web of red tape, to believe that less than a century ago the Customs were only concerned with stuff legitimately imported or professionally smuggled by the boatload, not with a homecoming tourist's few personal trophies, and passports were needed only rarely, usually in circumstances of war or siege, or often mainly as an official letter of introduction, entitling the bearer to special courtesies and consideration. Even after the last war, the ordinary British passport (since somewhat watered down) used to "request and require in the name of His Majesty the King that all persons shall allow the Bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance, and afford him any assistance or protection of which he may stand in need". The American passport never made any such formal demands, but there was an era when it had a prestigious implication that if the Bearer was not treated right, Teddy Roosevelt or somebody would be around with a big stick to find out why. Today, most countries seem to find it more discreet or economical to simply disown any of their nationals who get into trouble, so that a passport has become nothing but an overgrown identity card, guaranteeing nothing either to the Bearer or his foreign hosts.

Therefore its only imaginable uses are either, a) to enable a country to stop undesirable immigrants at the border, or b) to help a country imprison its own people by refusing them passports.

The absurdity of this pretext lies in the fact that faked or forged passports are always available to criminal or espionage circles. You or I would not know how to get one, but any professional crook or spy does. And any fugitive who escapes across the right frontier, even with no passport, can usually count on asylum either from political sympathy or from a generous share of his loot. So that the passports, the immigration forms, and the time-wasting queues at the frontier barriers only inconvenience the plain harmless Joe.

Everyone also knows that the average Customs examination of a suitcase would not find any contraband smaller than a quart of rum, and that the smugglers of priceless minutiae like drugs and diamonds are only caught through trailings and tip-offs, so that the duties collected from ordinary tourists don't even pay the wages of the inspectors.

When will some truly progressive country make history by calling the whole nonsense off?

Leslie Charteris

Seated, l. to r.: Bennett Cerf, Faith Baldwin, Bergen Evans, Bruce Catton, Mignon G. Eberhart, John Caples, J. D. Ratcliff
Standing: Mark Wiseman, Max Shulman, Rudolf Flesch, Red Smith, Rod Serling

Photo by Philippe Halsman

12 famous authors start a new kind of writing school

If you have writing talent worth developing, here's an opportunity never before available:

Twelve of America's most famous authors have created a school of professional writing to help you develop your skill, talent and craftsmanship . . . and to pass on to you their secrets of achieving success and recognition.

This unique home-training program is supervised by Rod Serling, winner of five Emmys for TV writing; Pulitzer Prize historian Bruce Catton; best-selling novelist Faith Baldwin; humorist Max *(Dobie Gillis)* Shulman; publisher-columnist Bennett Cerf; famed sportswriter Red Smith; Rudolf Flesch, top authority on readable writing; noted language expert Prof. Bergen Evans; famous mystery novelist Mignon G. Eberhart; J. D. Ratcliff, called by *Time* "America's No. 1 craftsman in the field of non-fiction"; and top ad men John Caples and Mark Wiseman.

These famous authors have developed a remarkable series of textbooks, lessons and writing assignments that present — in a clear and stimulating way — what they have learned in their long, hard climb to the top.

The School's instructors are themselves professional writers. Under the supervision of the 12 Famous Writers, these instructors work with students by mail, just as magazine and book editors work with many established authors. And they spend up to several hours on each assignment completed by a student . . . revising, correcting, and advising.

The Famous Writers School is less than three years old. Its first students are not due to graduate until later this year. Yet, many have sold their writings to such varied publications as *The Reader's Digest, Redbook, Popular Science, True Story.*

To select people with writing talent worth developing, the 12 Famous Writers have designed a revealing Talent Test. The coupon will bring you a copy, along with a brochure about the School. Your completed Test will be graded without charge or obligation by one of the School's instructors. If your Test indicates writing talent, you are then eligible to enroll in the School. You are, however, under absolutely no obligation to do so.

Famous Writers School
Dept. 6320, Westport, Connecticut

I am interested in finding out whether I have writing talent worth developing. Please mail me, without obligation, the Famous Writers Talent Test.

Mr.
Mrs. ..... Age .....
Miss
Street .....

City ..... Zone .....

County ..... State .....

The School is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the National Home Study Council.

THE
saint
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

AUGUST, 1963
VOL. 19, NO. 2

The Miracle Tea Party..... 3
by LESLIE CHARTERIS

Angel on My Foot..... 60
by MANNING COLES

Deadly Joker..... 72
by ROBERT BLOCH

Star Spangled Night..... 88
by FREDIC BROWN

Jose Gaspar and the Princess..... 92
by BAYNARD KENDRICK

The Specialist..... 96
by JAMES REACH

What's New in Crime.....110
by STEFAN SANTESSON

Mrs. Mumpson's Strange Pleasure.....116
by MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD

As Others See Us — II.....125
by LESLIE CHARTERIS and
DEAN W. DICKENSHEET

Leslie Charteris
Supervising Editor

Hans Stefan
Santesson
Editor

THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE, August, 1963, Vol. 19, No. 2. Published monthly by FICTION PUBLISHING COMPANY, 30 East 42nd Street, New York 17, New York, by arrangement with Saint Magazines, Inc. Single copy price, 35c. Subscriptions in U.S. and Canada, $4.00 per year. Subscription in foreign countries, $5.00 per year. Names of people and places are fictitious and any use of the name of an actual person or place is purely coincidental. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright 1963 by Fiction Publishing Company.

the miracle tea party

by Leslie Charteris

THIS STORY starts with four wild coincidences; so we may as well admit them at once and get it over with, and then there will be no more argument. The chronicler makes no apologies for them. A lot of much more far-fetched coincidences have been allowed to happen without protest in the history of the world, and all that can be done about it is to relate them exactly as they took place. And if it should be objected that these particular coincidences led to the downfall of sundry criminals who might otherwise never have been detected, it must be pointed out that at least half the convicts at present taking a cure in the cooler were caught that way.

Chief Inspector Claud Eustace Teal sat in a tea shoppe that was not much more than a powerful stone's throw from Scotland Yard. Dispassionately considered, it was quite a suitable target for stone-throwing, being one of those dens of ghastly chintz-curtained cheerfulness which stand as grisly omens of what the English-speaking races can expect from a few more generations of purity and hygiene;

Those who share the Saint's and my antipathy to radio and television commercials may be gratified by the retribution which overtakes at least one of these sickening spielers, in this pre-television episode. *L.C.*

Copyright 1938 by Leslie Charteris.

but Mr. Teal held it in a sort of affection born of habit.

He had finished his tea, and he sat glancing over a newspaper. And in order that there may be positively no deception about this, it must be admitted at once that not even the most enthusiastic advocate of temperance would have chosen him as an advertisement of the place that he was in. Mr. Teal, in fact, who even at his best suffered from certain physical disadvantages which made it permanently impossible for him to model for a statue of Dancing Spring, was at that moment not even in the running for a picture of Mellow Autumn. His round pink face had a distinctly muddy tinge under its roseate bloom; the champing of his jaws on the inevitable wodge of spearmint was visibly listless; and his china-blue eyes contained an expression of joyless but stoical endurance. He looked, to speak with complete candour, rather like a discontented cow with a toothache.

After a while he put the newspaper aside and simply sat, gazing mournfully into space. It was a Sunday afternoon, and at that rather late hour he had the place to himself, except for a vacant-faced waitress who sat in a corner knitting some garment in a peculiarly dreadful shade of mustard yellow. A small radio on the mantelpiece, strategically placed between a vase of artificial flowers and a bowl of wax fruit, was emitting strains of that singularly lugubrious and eviscerated music which supplies the theme song of modern romance. Mr. Teal appeared to be enduring that infliction in the same spirit as Job might have endured the development of his sixty-second boil. He looked as if he was only waiting for someone to come along and relieve him of the cares of the Universe.

Someone did come along, but not with that intention. The crash of the door opening made Mr. Teal's over-wrought nerves wince; and when he saw who it was he closed his eyes for a moment in sheer agony. For although Mr. William Kennedy was easily the most popular of the Assistant Commissioners, his vast and jovial personality was approximately the last thing that a man in Mr. Teal's condition is able to appreciate.

"Hullo, laddie!" he roared, in a voice that boomed through the room like a gale. "What's the matter? You look like a cold poached egg left over from yesterday's breakfast. What are you doing – thinking about the Saint?"

Mr. Teal started as if an electric current had been applied to his posterior. He had expected the worst, but this was worse than that. If anything could have been said to fill his cup of

suffering to the brim, that something had been said. Mr. Teal now looked as if there was nothing left except for him to find some suitably awful spot in which to die.

Scientists, whose restless researches leave no phenomenon unprobed, have discovered that certain persons are subject to quite disproportionately grievous reactions from stimuli which to other persons are entirely innocuous. These inordinate sensitivities are known as allergies. Some people are allergic to oysters, others to onions; others need only eat a strawberry to be attacked by violent pains and break out in a rash.

Chief Inspector Teal was allergic to the Saint. But it must be admitted that this was an acquired rather than a congenital allergy. It is true that Mr. Teal, on account of his profession, was theoretically required to be allergic to every kind of law-breaker; but there was nothing in his implied contract with the State which required him to be pierced by such excruciating pains or to break out in such a vivid erythema as he was apt to do whenever he heard the name or nickname of that incorrigible outlaw who had been christened Simon Templar.

But the Saint was the kind of outlaw that no officer of the Law can ever have had to cope with since the Sheriff of Nottingham was pestered into apoplexy by the Robin Hood of those more limited days. There was no precedent in modern times for anything like him; and Mr. Teal was convinced that it could only be taken as evidence of the deliberate maliciousness of Fate that out of all the other police officers who might have been chosen for the experiment the lot had fallen upon him. For there was no doubt at all in his mind that all the griefs and woes which had been visited upon him in recent years could be directly attributed to that amazing buccaneer whose unlawful excursions against evildoers had made criminal history, and yet whose legal conviction and punishment was beginning to seem as hopelessly improbable an event as the capture of a genuine and indisputable sea-serpent. Kennedy was not being deliberately cruel. It was simply his uninhibited proclamation of what was an almost automatic association of ideas to anyone who knew anything at all about Teal's professional life: that whenever Mr. Teal looked as if he was in acute agony he was undergoing a spell of Saint trouble. The fact that Mr. Teal, as it happened, had not been thinking about the Saint at all when Kennedy came in only gave the reminder a deeper power to wound.

"No, sir," said Mr. Teal, with

the flimsiest quality of restraint. "I was not thinking about the Saint. I haven't seen him for weeks; I don't know what he's doing; and what's more, I don't care."

Kennedy raised his eyebrows.

"Sorry, laddie. I thought from your appearance——"

"What's wrong with my blasted appearance?" snarled the detective, with a reckless disregard for discipline of which in normal times he would never have been capable; but Kennedy had no great respect for trivial formalities.

"Blasted is right," he agreed readily. "You look like something the lightning had started out to strike and then given up as a work of supererogation. What is it, then? Have you been getting hell for falling down on that espionage business?"

Mr. Teal was able to ignore that. It was true that he had made very little headway with the case referred to, but that was not worrying him unduly. When official secrets spring a leak, it is usually a slow job to trace the leakage to its source, and Teal was too old a hand to let himself be disturbed by the slowness of it.

His trouble was far more intimate and personal; and the time has now come when it must be revealed.

Mr. Teal was suffering from indigestion.

It was a complaint that had first intruded itself on his consciousness some weeks ago; since when its symptoms had become steadily more severe and regular, until by this time he had come to regard a stomach-ache as the practically inevitable sequel to any meal he ate. Since Mr. Teal's tummy constituted a very large proportion of Mr. Teal, his sufferings were considerable. They made him pessimistic and depressed, and more than usually morose. His working days had become long hours of discomfort and misery, and it seemed an eternity since he had spent a really restful and dreamless night. Even now, after having forgone his Sunday dinner in penitence for the price he had to pay for bacon and eggs at breakfast, the cream bun to whose succulent temptation he had not long ago succumbed was already beginning to give him the unhappily familiar sensation of having swallowed a live and singularly vicious crab. And this was the mortal dolour in addition to which he had had to receive a superfluous reminder of the Saint.

The waitress at last succeeded in gaining audience.

"Yes," boomed Kennedy. "Tea. Strong tea. And about half a ton of hot buttered crumpets."

Mr. Teal closed his eyes again as another excruciating cramp curled through him.

In his darkened loneliness he became aware that the music had been interrupted and the radio was talking.

". . . and this amazing tea is not only guaranteed to relieve indigestion immediately, but to effect a complete and permanent cure," said a clear young voice with a beautiful Oxford accent. "Every day we are receiving fresh testimonials——"

"My God," said Teal with a shudder, "where is that Eric-or-Little-by-Little drivelling from?"

"Radio Calvados," answered Kennedy. "One of the new continental stations. They go to work every Sunday. I suppose we shall have to put up with it as long as the BBC refuses to produce anything but string quartets and instructive talks on Sundays."

"Miracle Tea," said Eric, continuing little by little. "Remember that name. Miracle Tea. Obtainable from all high-class chemists, or direct by post from the Miracle Tea Company, 909 Victoria Street, London. Buy some Miracle Tea tonight! . . . And now we shall conclude this program with out signature song —*Tea for You.*"

Mr. Teal held on to his stomach as the anguishing parody proceeded to rend the air.

"Miracle Tea!" he rasped savagely. "What'll they think of next? As if tea could cure indigestion! Pah!"

The way he said "*Pah!*" almost blew his front teeth out; and Kennedy glanced at him discerningly.

"Oh, so that's the trouble, is it? The mystery is solved."

"I didn't say——"

Kennedy grinned at him.

The door of the tea shoppe opened again, to admit Inspector Peters, Kennedy's chief assistant.

"Sorry I was so long, sir," he apologised, taking the vacant chair at their table. "The man was out——"

"Never mind that," said Kennedy. "Teal's got indigestion."

"You can fix that with a bit of bicarb," said Peters helpfully.

"So long as it isn't something more serious," said Kennedy, reaching for the freshly-arrived plate of hot buttered crumpets with a hand like a leg of mutton and the air of massive confidence which can only be achieved by a man of herculean physique who knows that his interior would never dare to give him any backchat. "I've been noticing his face lately. I must say I've been worried about it, but, I didn't like to mention it before he brought it up."

"You mean the twitching?" asked Peters.

"Not so much the twitching as the jaundiced colour. It looks bad to me."

"Damn it," began Teal explosively.

"Acid," pronounced Kennedy, engulfing crumpets. "That's generally the beginning of the trouble. Too much acid swilling around the lining of your stomach, and where are you? In next to no time you're a walking mass of gastric ulcers. You know what happens when a gastric ulcer eats into a blood-vessel?"

"You bleed to death?" asked Peters interestedly.

"Like a shot," said Kennedy, apparently unaware of the fact that Teal was starting to simmer and splutter like a pan full of hot grease. "It's even worse when the ulcer makes a whacking great hole in the wall of the stomach and your dinner falls through into the abdominal cavity. . ."

Mr. Teal clung to his chair and wished that he had been born deaf.

It was no consolation at all to him to recall that it had actually been the Saint himself who had started the fashion of making familiar and even disgusting comments on the shape and dimensions of the stomach under discussion, a fashion which Mr. Teal's own colleagues, to their eternal disgrace, had been surprisingly quick to adopt. And now that it had been revealed that his recent irritability had been caused by acute indigestion, the joke would take a new lease of life. It is a curious but undeniable fact that a man may have a headache or a toothache or an earache and receive nothing but sympathy from those about him; but let his stomach ache and all he can expect is facetiousness of the most callous and offensive kind. Mr. Teal's stomach was a magnificently well-developed organ, measuring more inches from east to west than he cared to calculate and he was perhaps excessively sensitive about it; but in its present condition the most faintly flippant reference to it was exquisite torment.

He stood up.

"Will you excuse me, sir?" he said, with as much dignity as he could muster. "I've got a job to do this evening."

"Don't forget to buy some Miracle Tea on your way home," was Kennedys farewell.

Mr. Teal walked up Victoria Street in the direction of his modest lodgings. He had no job to do at all; but it would have been physically impossible for him to have stomached another minute of the conversation he had left behind him. He walked, because he had not far to go, and the exercise helped to distract his thoughts from the feeling that his intestines were being gnawed by a colony of hungry rats. Not that the distraction was by any means complete: the rats continued their remorseless depredations. But he was able

to give them only half his attention instead of the whole of it.

In the circumstances it was perhaps natural that the broadcast which had been added to his current griefs should remain vaguely present in the background of his mind. The address given had been in Victoria Street. And therefore it was perhaps not such a wild coincidence after all that he should presently have found himself gazing at a large showcard in the window of a chemist's shop which he must have been passing practically every day for the last two months.

INDIGESTION?
Try
MIRACLE TEA
2/6 a packet

Mr. Teal was not even averagely gullible; but a man in his state of mind is not fully responsible for his actions. The tribulations of the last few weeks had reduced him to a state of desperation in which he would have tried a dose of prussic acid if it had been recommended with sufficient promises of alleviating his distress.

With a furtive glance around him, as if he was afraid of being caught in a disreputable act, he entered the shop and approached the counter, behind which stood a shifty-eyed young man in a soiled white coat.

"A packet of Miracle Tea," said Mr. Teal, lowering his voice to a mumble, although the shop was empty, as though he had been asking for some unmentionable merchandise.

He planked down a half-crown with unconvincing defiance.

The assistant hesitated for a moment, turned, and took an oblong yellow packet from a shelf behind him. He hesitated again, still holding it as if he was reluctant to part with it.

"Yes, sir?" he said suggestively.

"What d'you mean—'yes, sir?'" blared Mr. Teal with the belligerence of increasing embarrassment.

"Isn't there something else, sir?"

"No, there isn't anything else!" retorted the detective, whose sole remaining ambition was to get out of the place as quickly as possible with his guilty purchase. "Give me that stuff and take your money."

He reached over and fairly snatched the yellow packet out of the young man's hand, stuffed it into his pocket, and lumbered out as if he were trying to catch a train. He was in such a hurry that he almost bowled over another customer who was just entering the shop—and this customer, for some reason, quickly averted his face.

Mr. Teal was too flustered even to notice him. He went plodding more rapidly than usual on his homeward way, feeling as if his face was a bright crimson which would announce his shame to any passer-by, and never dreaming that Destiny had already grasped him firmly by the scruff of the neck.

Five minutes later he was trudging through a narrow side street within a couple of blocks of his apartment. The comatose dusk of Sunday evening lay over it like a shroud: not a single other human creature was in sight, and the only sound apart from the solid tread of his own regulation boots was a patter of hurried footsteps coming up behind him. There was nothing in that to make him turn his head. . . . The footsteps caught up until they were almost on his heels; and then something hit him a terrific blow on the side of the head and everything dissolved into black darkness.

Simon Templar's views on the subject of Chief Inspector Teal, unlike Chief Inspector Teal's views on the subject of the Saint, were apt to fluctuate between very contradictory extremes. There were times when he felt that life would lose half its savour if he were deprived of the perpetual joy of dodging Teal's constant frantic efforts to put him behind bars; but there were other times when he felt that his life would be a lot less strenuous if Teal's cardinal ambition had been a little less tenacious. There had been times when he had felt sincere remorse for the more bitter humiliations which he had sometimes been compelled to inflict on Mr. Teal, even though these times had been the only alternatives to his own defeat in their endless duel; there had been other times when he could have derived such satisfaction from beating Teal over the head witih a heavy bar of iron with large knobs on the end.

One thing which the Saint was certain about, however, was that his own occasional urges to assault the detective's cranium with a blunt instrument did not mean that he was at any time prepared to permit any common or garden thug to take the same liberties with that long-suffering dome.

This was the last of the coincidences of which due warning has already been given—that Simon Templar's long sleek Hirondel chanced to be taking a short cut through the back streets of the district at that fateful hour, and whirled round a corner into the one street where it was most needed at the precise moment when Teal's ample body was spreading itself over the pavement as flat as a body of that architecture can con--

veniently be spread without the aid of a steam roller.

The Saint's foot on the accelerator gave the great car a last burst in the direction of the spot where these exciting things were happening, and then he stood on the brakes. The thug who had committed the assault was already bending over Teal's prostrate form when the screech of skidding tires made him stop and look up in startled fear. For a split second he hesitated, as if considering whether to stand his ground and give battle; but something about the sinewy breadth of the Saint's shoulders and the athletic and purposeful speed with which the Saint's tall frame catapulted itself out of the still sliding car must have discouraged him. A profound antipathy to the whole scene and everyone in it appeared to overwhelm him; and he turned and began to depart from it like a stone out of a sling.

The Saint started after him. At that moment the Saint had no idea that the object of his timely rescue was Chief Inspector Teal in person: it was simply that the sight of one bloke hitting another bloke with a length of gaspipe was a spectacle which inevitably impelled him to join in the festivities with the least possible delay. But as he started in pursuit he caught his first glimpse of the fallen victim's face, and the surprise checked his stride as if he had run into a wall. He paused involuntarily to confirm the identification; and that brief delay lost him any chance he might have had of making a capture. The thug was already covering the ground with quite remarkable velocity, and the extra start he had gained from the Saint's hesitation had given him a lead which even Simon Templar's long legs doubted their ability to make up. Simon gave up the idea with a regretful sigh, and stooped to find out how much damage had been sustained by his favourite enemy.

It only took him a moment to assure himself that his existence was unlikely to be rendered permanently uneventful by the premature removal of its most pungent spice; but nevertheless there was also no doubt that Teal was temporarily in the land of dreams, and that it would do the Saint himself no good to be found standing over his sleeping body. On the other hand, to leave Mr. Teal to finish his sleep in peace on the sidewalk was something which no self-respecting buccaneer could do. The actual commotion from which the situation had evolved had been practically negligible. Not a window had been flung up; not a door had been opened. The street remained sunken in its twilight torpor, and once again there was no other living

soul in sight.

The Saint shrugged. There seemed to be only one thing to do, so he did it. With a certain amount of effort, he picked up Mr. Teal's weighty person and heaved it into the car, dumped Teal's macintosh and hat on top of him, picked up an oblong yellow package which had fallen out of his pocket and slung that in as well, got into the driving seat himself, and drove away.

That Simon's diagnosis had been accurate was proved by the fact that Teal was beginning to groan and blink his eyes when the Hirondel pulled up at his front door. The Saint lighted a cigarette and looked at him reproachfully.

"I'm ashamed of you," he said. "An old man of your age, letting yourself be picked up in the gutter like that. And not even during licensing hours, either. Where did you get the embalming fluid?"

"So it was you, was it?" Teal muttered thickly.

"I beg your pardon?"

"What the hell was the idea?" demanded Teal, with a growing indignation which left no doubt of his recovery.

"The idea of what?"

"Creeping up behind me and knocking me on the head! If you think I'm going to let you get away with that——"

"Claud," said the Saint, "do I understand that you're accusing me again?"

"Oh, no!" Teal had his eyes wide open now, and they were red with wrath. The edge of his sarcasm was as silky and delicate as the blade of a cross-cut saw. "It was two other people. They fell out of the sky with parachutes——"

The Saint sighed.

"I don't want to interrupt you. But can this great brain of yours see any particular reason why I should cosh you today? We haven't seen each other for ages, and so far as I know you haven't been doing anything to make me angry. And even if you had, and I thought it would be good for you to be bopped over the bean, do you think I'd take the trouble to bring you home afterwards, do you think I'd let you wake up while I was still around, instead of bopping you again and leaving you to wake up without knowing I'd been anywhere near you? I am a very modest man, Claud," said the Saint untruthfully, "but there are some aspersions on my intelligence which cut me to the quick, and you always seem to be the guy who thinks of them."

Mr. Teal rubbed his head.

"Well, what did happen?" he demanded grudgingly.

"I don't really know. When I shot over the horizon, there was some guy in the act of belting you over the lid with a handy

piece of lead pipe. I thought of asking him to stop and talk it over, but he ran too fast. So I just loaded you into the old jalopy and brought you home. Of course, if you really wanted to go on dozing in the gutter I can take you back."

The detective looked about him. His aching skull was clearing a little, enough at least for him to be able to see that this latest misfortune was something which, for once, might not be chargeable to the Saint's account. The realisation did not actually improve his temper.

"Have you any idea who it was?"

"That's a large order, isn't it? If you're as charming to all your other clients as you usually are to me, I should say that London must be crawling with birds who'd pay large sums of money for the fun of whacking you on the roof with a lump of iron."

"Well, what did this one look like?"snarled Teal impatiently.

"I'm blowed if I could draw his picture, Claud. The light was pretty bad, and he didn't stay very long. Medium height, ordinary build, thin face—nothing definite enough to help you much, I'm afraid."

Teal grunted.

Presently he said: "Thanks, anyway."

He said it as if he hated to say it, which he did. Being under any obligation to the Saint hurt him almost as much as his indigestion. Promptly he wished that he hadn't thought of that comparison. His stomach, reviving from a too fleeting anaesthesia, reminded him that it was still his most constant companion. And now he had a sore and splitting head as well. He realised that he felt about as unhappy as a man can feel.

He opened the door of the car, and took hold of his raincoat and bowler hat.

"G'night," he said.

"Good night," said the Saint cheerfully. "You know where I live, any time you decide you want a bodyguard."

Mr. Teal did not deign to reply. He crossed the sidewalk rather unsteadily, mounted the steps of the house, and let himself in without looking back. The door closed again behind him.

Simon chuckled as he let in the clutch and drove on towards the appointment to which he had been on his way. The episode which had just taken place would make a mildly amusing story to tell: aside from that obvious face value, he didn't give it a second thought. There was no reason why he should. There must have been enough hoodlums in the metropolis with long-cherished dreams of vengeance against Mr. Teal, aside from ordinary casual footpads, to account for the sprinting beater-up who had made

such an agile getaway: the only entertaining angle was that Coincidence should have chosen the Saint himself, of all possible people, to be the rescuer.

That was as much as the Saint's powers of clairvoyance were worth on that occasion.

Two hours later, when he had parked the Hirondel in the garage at Cornwall House, his foot kicked something out of the door as he got out. It was the yellow packet that had slipped out of Teal's pocket, which had fallen on to the floor and been left there forgotten by both men.

Simon picked it up; and when he saw the label he sighed, and then grinned again. So that was a new depth to which Mr. Teal had sunk; and the revelation of the detective's dyspepsia would provide a little extra piquancy to their next encounter in badinage. . . .

He went on reading the exaggerated claims made for Miracle Tea on the wrapper as he rode up in the elevator to his apartment. And as he read on, a new idea which could only have found a welcome in such a scapegrace sence of mischief as the Saint's. The product was called Miracle Tea, and there seemed to be no reason why it should not be endowed with miraculous properties before being returned to its owner. Chief Inspector Teal would surely be disappointed if it failed to perform miracles. And that could so easily be arranged. The admixture of a quantity of crushed senna pods, together with a certain amount of powdered calomel—the indicated specific in all cases of concussion. . . .

In his own living-room, the Saint proceeded to open the packet with great care, in such a way that it could be sealed again and bear no trace of having been tampered with.

Inside, there seemed to be a second paper wrapping. He took hold of one corner of it and pulled experimentally. A complete crumpled piece of paper came out in his fingers. Below that, there was another crumpled white pad. And after that, another. It went on until the whole package was empty, and the table on which he was working was covered with those creased white scraps. But no tea came to light. He picked up one of the pieces of paper and cautiously unfolded it, in case it should be the container of an individual dose. And then suddenly he sat quite still, while his blue eyes froze into narrowed pools of electrified ice as he realised what he was looking at.

It was a Bank of England note for fifty pounds.

"Miracle Tea", said the Saint reverently, "is a good name for it."

There were thirty of those

notes—a total of fifteen hundred pounds in unquestionably genuine cash, legal tender and ripe for immediate circulation.

There was a light step behind him, and Patricia Holm's hand fell on his shoulder.

"I didn't know you'd come in, boy," she said; and then she didn't go on. He felt her standing unnaturally still. After some seconds she said: "What have you been doing—breaking into the babys money-box?"

"Getting ready to write some letters," he said.

"How do you like the new notepaper?"

She pulled him round to face her.

"Come on," she said. "I like to know when you're going to be arrested. What's the charge going to be this time—burgling a bank?"

He smiled at her.

She was easy to smile at. Hair like a ripe corn in the sun, a skin like rose-petals, blue eyes that could be as wicked as his own, the figure of a young nymph, and something else that could not have been captured in any picture, something in her that laughed with him in all his misdeeds.

"Tea-drinking is the charge," he said. "I've signed the pledge, and henceforward this will be my only beverage."

She raised her fist.

"I'll push your face in."

"But it's true."

He handed her the packet from which the money had come. She sat on the table and studied every side of it. And after that she was only more helplessly perplexed.

"Go on," she said.

He told her the story exactly as it had happened.

"And now you know just as much as I do," he concluded. "I haven't even had time to do any thinking on it. Maybe we needn't bother. We shall wake up soon, and everything will be quite all right."

She put the box down again and looked at one of the notes.

"Are they real?"

"There isn't a doubt of it."

"Maybe you've got away with Teal's life savings."

"Maybe. But he has got a bank bank account. And can you really see Claud Eustace hoarding his worldly wealth in packets of patent tea?"

"Then it must be evidence in some case he's working on."

"It could be. But again, why keep it in this box?" Simon turned the yellow packet over in his supple hands. "It was perfectly sealed before I opened it. It looked as if it had never been touched. Why should he go to all that trouble? And suppose it was evidence just as it stood, how did he know what the evidence was without opening it? If he didn't know, he'd surely

have opened it on the spot, in front of witnesses. And if he did know, he had no business to take it home. Besides, if he did know that he was carrying dangerous evidence, he wouldn't have had to think twice about what motive there might be for slugging him on his way home; but he didn't seem to have the slightest idea what it was all about."

Patricia frowned.

"Could he be taking graft? This might be a way of slipping him the money."

Simon thought that over for a while; but in the end he shook his head.

"We've said a lot of rude things about Claud Eustace in our time, but I don't think even we could ever have said that seriously. He may be a nuisance, but he's so honest that it runs out of his ears. And still again, he'd have known what he was carrying, and known what anybody who slugged him might have been after, and the first thing he did when he woke up would have been to see if he'd still got the dough. But he didn't. He didn't even feel in his pockets."

"But wasn't he knocked silly?"

"Not that silly."

"Perhaps he was quite sure what had happened, and didn't want to give himself away."

"With me sitting beside him? if he'd even thought he'd lost something valuable, it wouldn't have been quite so easy for me to convince him that I wasn't the warrior with the gaspipe. He could have arrested me himself and searched me on the spot without necessarily giving anything away."

The girl shrugged despairingly.

"All right. So you think of something."

The Saint lighted a cigarette.

"I suppose I'm barmy, but there's only one thing I can think of. Claud Eustace didn't have the foggiest idea what was in the packet. He had a pain in his tum-tum, and he just bought it for medicine on the way home. It was meant to be handed to someone else, and the fellow in the shop got mixed up. As soon as Teal's gone out with it, the right man comes in, and there is a good deal of commotion. Somebody realises what's happened, and goes dashing after Teal to get the packet back. He bends his blunt instrument over Teal's head, and is just about to frisk him when I arrive and spoil everything, and he has to lam. I take Teal home, and Teal has something else to think about besides his tummy-ache, so he forgets all about his Miracle Tea, and I win it. And is it something to win!"

The Saint's eyes were kindling with an impish excitement that had no direct connection with

the windfall that had just dropped into his lap. Patricia did not need him to say any more to tell her what was going on in his mind. To the Saint, any puzzle was a potential adventure; and the Saint on the trail of adventure was a man transformed, a dynamic focus of ageless and superhuman forces against which no ordinary mortal could argue. She had known him so well for so many years, had known so long that he was beyond her power to change, even if she had wished to change him.

She said slowly: "But what is the racket?"

"That would be worth knowing," he said; and he had no need to say that he intended to know. He leaned back ecstatically. "But just think of it, darling! If we could only see the uproar and agitation that must be going on at this minute in the place where this tea came from . . ."

As a matter of record, the quality of the uproar and the agitation in the shop where Mr. Teal had made his purchase would not have disappointed him at all; although in fact it had preceded this conversation by some time.

Mr. Henry Osbett, registered proprietor of the drug store at 909 Victoria Street which was also the registered premises of the Miracle Tea Company, was normally a man of quite distinguished and even haughty aspect, being not only tall and erect, but also equipped with a pair of long and gracefully curved moustaches which stuck out on either side of his face like the wings of a soaring gull, which gave him a rather old-fashioned military air in spite of his horn-rimmed glasses. Under the stress of emotion, however, his dignity was visibly frayed. He listened to his shifty-eyed assistant's explanations with fuming impatience.

"How was I to know?" the young man was protesting. "He came at exactly the right time, and I've never seen Nancock before. I didn't mean to give him the packet without the password, but he snatched it right out of my hand and rushed off."

"Excuses!" snarled the chemist, absent-mindedly grabbing handfuls of his whiskers and tying them in knots. "Why, if you'd even known who he was——"

"I didn't know—not until Nancock told me. How could I know?"

"At least you could have got the package back."

The other swallowed.

"I'd only have got myself caught," he said sullenly. "That chap who jumped out of the car was twice my size. He'd 've killed me!"

Mr. Osbett stopped maltreating his moustache and looked at

him for a long moment in curiously contrasting immobility.

"That might have saved someone else the trouble," he said; and the tone in which he said it made the young man's face turn grey.

Osbett's cold stare lasted for a moment longer; and then he took a fresh grip on his whiskers and turned and scuttled through to the back of the shop. One might almost have thought that he had gone off in the full flush of enthusiasm to fetch an axe.

Beyond the dispensing room there was a dark staircase. As he mounted the stairs his gait and carriage changed in subtle ways until it was as if a different man had entered his clothes. On the upper landing his movements were measured and deliberate. He opened a door and went into a rather shabby and nondescript room which served as his private office. There were two or three old-fashioned filing cabinets, a littered desk with the polish worn off at the edges, a dingy carpet, and a couple of junk-store chairs. Mr. Osbett sat down at the desk and opened a packet of cheap cigarettes.

He was a very worried man, and with good reason; but he no longer looked flustered. He had, at that moment, a very cold-blooded idea of his position. He was convinced that Teal's getaway with the packet of Miracle Tea had been neither premeditated nor intentional—otherwise there would have been further developments before this. It had simply been one of those fantastic accidents which lie in wait for the most careful conspiracies. That was a certain consolation; but not much. As soon as the contents of the packet were opened there would be questions to answer; and while it was quite certain that nothing criminal could be proved from any answers he cared to give, it would still make him the object of an amount of suspicious attention which might easily lead to disaster later. There remained the chance that Teal might not decide to actually take a dose of Miracle Tea for some hours yet, and it was a chance that had to be seized quickly.

After another moment's intensive consideration, Mr. Osbett picked up the telephone.

Simon Templar had been out and come in again after a visit to the nearest chemist. Now he was industriously stirring an interesting mixture in a large basin borrowed from the kitchen. Patricia Holm sat in an armchair and watched him despairingly.

"Did you ever hear a proverb about little things pleasing little minds?" she said.

Unabashed, the Saint put down his spoon and admired his handiwork. To any but the most

minute examination, it looked exactly like a high-grade small-leaf tea. And some of it was. The other ingredients were hardly less ordinary, except in that particular combination.

"Did you ever hear another proverb about a prophet in his own country?" he answered. "If you had a little more reverence for my mind, you'd see that it was nearly double its normal size. Don't you get the idea?"

"Not yet."

"This is what I originally meant to do. Maybe it wasn't such a huge idea then; although if I could get enough little ideas that handed me fifteen hundred quid a time I wouldn't worry so much about passing up the big stuff. But still that was just good clean fun. Now it's more than that. If I'm right, and Teal still doesn't know what he had in his pocket this afternoon, we don't want him to even start thinking about it. Therefore I just want to return him his Miracle Tea, and I'll be sure he won't give it another thought. But I never had any Miracle Tea. Therefore I've got to concoct a passable substitute. I don't know the original formula; but if this recipe doesn't live up to the name I'll drink a gallon of it."

"Of course," she said, "you couldn't just go out and buy another packet to give him."

Simon gazed at her in stunned admiration. "Could you believe that I never thought of that?"

"No," said Patricia.

"Maybe you're right,' said the Saint ruefully.

He gave the basin another stir, and shrugged.

"Anyway," he said, "it'd be a pity to waste all this work, and the chance of a lifetime as well."

He sat down at the table and cheerfully proceeded to pack his own remarkable version of Miracle Tea into the original carton. Having stuffed it full, he replaced the seals and wrappings with as much care as he had removed them; and when he had finished there was not a trace to show that the package had ever been tampered with.

"What will you do if he dies?" asked the girl.

"Send a wreath of tea roses to his funeral," said the Saint. He put down the completed packet after he had inspected it closely from every angle, and moved himself over to a more comfortable lounging site on the settee. His eyes were alert and hot with gathering zest of devilment. "Now we go into the second half of this brilliant conspiracy."

"What does that mean?"

"Finding out where Claud Eustace buys fifteen hundred quid for half a dollar. Just think, sweetheart—we can go shopping once a week and keep ourselves in caviar without ever doing an-

other stroke of work!"

He reached for the telephone and set it on his lap while he dialed Teal's private number with a swift and dancing forefinger. The telephone, he knew, was beside Teal's bed; and the promptness with which his ring was answered established the detective's location with quite miraculous certainty.

"I hope," said the Saint, with instanteous politeness, "that I haven't interrupted you in the middle of any important business, Claud."

The receiver did not actually explode in his ear. It was a soundly constructed instrument, designed to resist spontaneous detonation. It did, however, appear to feel some strain in reproducing the cracked-foghorn cadence in which the answering voice said: "Who's that?"

"And how," said the Saint, "is the little tum-tum tonight?"

Mr. Teal did not repeat his question. He had no need to. There was only one voice in the whole world which was capable of inquiring after his stomach with the exact inflection which was required to make that hypersensitive organ curl up into tight knots that sent red and yellow flashes squirting across his eyeballs.

Mr. Teal did not groan aloud; but a mute organic groan swept through him like a cramp from his fingertips to his toes.

It is true that he was in bed, and it is also true that he had been interrupted in the middle of some important business; but that important business had been simply and exclusively concerned with trying to drown his multitudinous woes in sleep. For a man in the full bloom of health to be smitten over the knob with a blunt instrument is usually a somewhat trying experience; but for a man in Mr. Teal's dyspeptic condition to be thus beaned is ultimate disaster. Mr. Teal now had two fearful pains rivalling for his attention, which he had been trying to give to neither. The only way of evading this responsibility which he had been able to think of had been to go to bed and go to sleep, which is what he had set out to do as soon as the Saint had left him at his door; but sleep had steadfastly eluded him until barely five minutes before the telephone bell had blared its recall to conscious suffering into his anguished ear. And when he became aware that the emotions which he had been caused by that recall had been wrung out of him for no better object than to answer some Saintly badinage about his abdomen, his throat closed up so that it was an effort for him to breathe.

"Is that all you want to know?" he got out in a strangled squawk. "Because if so——"

"But it bothers me, Claud. You know how I love your tummy. It would break my heart if anything went wrong with it."

"Who told you anything was wrong with it?"

"Only my famous deductive genius. Or do you mean to tell me you drink Miracle Tea because you like it?"

There was a pause. With the aid of television, Mr. Teal could have been seen to wiggle. The belligerent blare crumpled out of his voice.

"Oh," he said weakly. "What miracle tea?"

"The stuff you had in your pocket this afternoon. I threw it into the car with your other things when I picked you up, but we forgot it when you got out. I've just found it. Guaranteed to cure indigestion, colic, flatulence, constipation, venomous bile, spots before the eyes . . . I didn't know you had so many troubles, Claud."

"I haven't!" Teal roared defiantly. His stomach promptly performed two complicated and unprecedented evolutions and made a liar of him. He winced, and floundered. "I—I just happened to hear it advertised on the radio, and then I saw another advertisement in a shop window on the way home, so I thought I'd try some. I—I haven't been feeling very fit lately——"

"Then I certainly think you ought to try something," said the Saint charitably. "I'll beetle over with your poison right away; and if I can help out with a spot of massage, you only have to say the word."

Mr. Teal closed his eyes. Of all the things he could think of which might aggravate his miseries, a visit from the Saint at that time was the worst.

"Thanks," he said with frantic earnestness, "but all I want now is to get some sleep. Bring it over some other time, Saint."

Simon reached thoughtfully for a cigarette.

"Just as you like, Claud. Shall we say the May Fair tomorrow, at four o'clock?"

"You could send it round," Teal said desperately. "Or just throw it away. I can get some more. If it's any bother——"

"No bother at all, dear old collywobble. Let's call it a date. Tomorrow at four—and we'll have a cup of tea together . . ."

The Saint laid the telephone gently back on its bracket and replaced it on the table beside him. His thumb flicked over the wheel of his lighter; and the tip of his cigarette kindled to a glow that matched the brightening gleam of certainty in his blue eyes.

He had obtained all the information he wanted without pressing a single conspicuous question. Mr. Teal had bought his Miracle Tea on the way home—and Simon knew that Mr.

Teal's way home, across Parliament Square and up Victoria Street, was so rigidly established by years of unconscious habit that a blind man could almost have followed it by tracing the groove which the detective's regulation boots must by that time have worn along the pavement. Even if there were more than one chemist's along that short trail with a Miracle Tea advertisement in the window, the process of elimination could not take long. . . .

Patricia was watching him.

She said: "So what?"

"So we were right," said the Saint; and his voice was lilting with incorrigible magic. "Claud doesn't give a damn about his tea. It doesn't mean a thing in his young life. He doesn't care if he ever sees it again. He just bought it by a fluke, and he doesn't even know what sort of a fluke it was."

"Are you sure?" asked Patricia cautiously. "If he just doesn't want you to suspect anything—"

The Saint shook his head.

"I know all Claud's voices much too well. It he'd tried to get away with anything like that, I should have heard it. And why should he try? I offered to bring it round at once, and he could have said nothing and let me bring it. Why should he take any risk at all of something going wrong when he could have had the package back in half an hour. Teal may look dumb sometimes, but you can't see him being so dumb as that." Simon stood up, and his smile was irresistibly expectant. "Come out into the world with me, darling, and let's look for this shop where they sell miracles!"

His energy carried her off like a tide race; the deep purr of the Hirondel as he drove it at fantastic speeed to Parliament Square was in tune with his mood. Why it should have happened again, like this, he didn't know; but it might as well have been this way as any other. Whatever the way, it had been bound to happen. Destiny could never leave him alone for long, and it must have been at least a week since anything exciting had happened to him. But now that would be all put right, and there would be trouble and adventure and mystery again, and with a little luck some boodle at the end; that was all that mattered. Somewhere in this delirious business of Miracle Tea and Bank of England notes there must be crime and dark conspiracies and all manner of mischief — he couldn't surmise yet what kind of racket could subsist on trading handfuls of bank notes for half-crowns, but it was even harder to imagine anything like that in a line of legitimate business, so some racket or other it must be, and new rackets could never be al-

together dull. He parked the car illegally on the corner of Victoria Street, and got out.

"Let's walk,' he said.

He took Patricias arm and strolled with her up the street; and as they went he burbled exuberantly.

"Maybe it's an eccentric millionaire who suffered from acute dypepsia all his life, and in his will he directed that all his fortune was to be distributed among other sufferers, because he knew that there really wasn't any cure at all, but at least the money would be some consolation. So without any publicity his executors had the dough wrapped up in packets labelled as an indigestion cure, feeling pretty sure that nobody who didn't have indigestion would buy it, and thereby saving themselves the trouble of sorting through a lot of applicants with bogus belly-aches. . . . Or maybe it's some guy who has made all the money in the world out of defrauding the poor nitwitted public with various patent medicines, whose conscience has pricked him in his old age so that he is trying to fix himself up for the Hereafter by making restitution, and the most appropriate way be can think of to do that is to distribute the geetus in the shape of another patent medicine, figuring that that is the way it's most likely to fall into the same hands that it originally came from. . . . Or maybe—"

"Or maybe," said Patricia, "this is the place you're looking for."

Simon stopped walking and looked at it.

There was a showcard in the centre of the window—the same card, as a matter of fact, which Mr. Teal had seen. But the Saint was taking no chances.

"Let's make sure," he said.

He led her the rest of the way up the street for a block beyond the turning where Mr. Teal would have branched off on the most direct route to his lodgings, and back down the opposite side; but no other drug-store window revealed a similar sign.

Simon stood on the other side of the road again, and gazed across at the brightly lighted window which they had first looked at. He read the name "HENRY OSBETT & CO." across the front of the shop.

He let go Patricia's arm.

"Toddle over, darling," he said, "and buy me a packet of Miracle Tea."

"What happens if I get shot?" she asked suspiciously.

"I shall hear the bang," he said, "and phone for an ambulance."

Two minutes later she rejoined him with a small neat parcel in her hand. He fell in beside her as she came across the road, and turned in the direction of the lower end of the

street, where he had left the car.

"How was Comrade Osbett?" he murmured. "Still keeping up with the world?"

"He looked all right, if he was the fellow who served me." She passed him the packet she was carrying. "Now do you mind telling me what good this is supposed to do?"

"We must listen to one of their broadcasts and find out. According to the wrapper, it disperses bile——"

She reached across to his hip pocket, and he laughed.

"Okay, darling. Don't waste any bullets—we may need them. I just wanted to find out if there were any curious features about buying Miracle Tea, and I didn't want to go in myself because I'm liable to want to go in again without b e i n g noticed too much."

"I didn't see anything curious," she said. "I just asked for it, and he wrapped it up and gave it to me.'"

"No questions or stalling?"

"No. It was just like buying a toothbrush or anything else."

"Didn't he seem to be at all interested in who was buying it?"

"Not a bit."

He held the package to his ear, shook it, crunched it speculatively.

"We'll have a drink somewhere and see if we've won anything," he said.

At a secluded corner table in the Florida, a while later, he opened the packet, with the same care to preserve the seals and wrappings as he had given to the first consignment, and tipped out the contents on to a plate. The contents, to any ordinary examination, consisted of nothing but tea—and, by the smell and feel of it, not very good tea either.

The Saint sighed, and called a waiter to remove the mess.

"It looks as if we were wrong about that eccentric millionaire," he said. "Or else the supply of doremi has run out. . . . Well, I suppose we shall just have to go to work again." He folded the container and stowed it carefully away in his pocket; and if he was disappointed he was able to conceal his grief. A glimmer of reckless optimism curled the corners of his mouth. "You know, darling, I have a hunch that some interesting things are going to happen before this time tomorrow night."

He was a better prophet than he knew, and it took only a few hours to prove it.

Simon Templar slept like a child. A thunderstorm bursting over his room would not have woken him; a herd of wild elephants stampeding past his bed would scarcely have made him stir; but one kind of noise that other ears might not have heard

at all even in full wakefulness brought him back instantaneously to life with every faculty sharpened and on tiptoe.

He awoke in a breathless flash, like a watchdog,without the slightest perceptible alteration in his rate of breathing or any sudden movement. Anyone standing over him would not have even sensed the change that had taken place. But his eyes were half open, and his wits were skidding back over the last split second of sleep like the recoil of taut elastic, searching for a definition of the sound that had roused him.

The luminous face of a clock across the room told him that he had slept less than two hours. And the thinly phosphorescent hands hadn't moved on enough for the naked eye to see when he knew why he was awake.

In the adjoining living-room, something human had moved.

Simon drew down the automatic from under his pillow and slid out of bed like a phantom. He left the communicating door alone, and sidled noiselessly through the other door which led out into the hall. The front door was open just enough to split the darkness with a knife-edge of illumination from the lights on the landing outside: he eased over to it like a cat, slipped his fingers through the gap, and felt the burred edges of the hole which had been drilled through the outside of the frame so that the catch of the spring lock would be pushed back.

A light blinked beyond the open door of the living-room. The Saint came to the entrance and looked in. Silhouetted against the subdued glow of an electric torch he saw the shape of a man standing by the table with his back to the door, and his bare feet padded over the carpet without a breath of sound until they were almost under the intruder's heels. He leaned over until his lips were barely a couple of inches from the visitor's right ear.

"Boo," said the Saint.

It was perhaps fortunate for the intruder that he had a strong heart, for if he had had the slightest cardiac weakness the nervous shock which spun him round would have probably popped it like a balloon. As it was, an involuntary yammer of sheer primitive fright dribbled out of his throat before he lashed out blindly in no less instinctive self-defence.

Simon had anticipated that. He was crouching almost to his knees by that time, and his left arm snaked around the lower part of the man's legs simultaneously with a quick thrust of his shoulder against the other's thighs.

The burglar went over backwards with a violent thud; and as most of his breath jolted out

of him he freighted it with a selection of picturesque expletives which opened up new vistas of biologic theory. One hand, swinging up in a vicious arc, was caught clearly in the beam of the fallen flashlight, and it was not empty.

"I think," said the Saint, "we can do without the persuader.

He jabbed the muzzle of his gun very hard into the place where his guest's ribs forked, and heard a satisfactory gasp of pain in response. His left hand caught the other's wrist as it descended, twisted with all the skill of a manipulative surgeon, and let go again to grab the life-preserver as it dropped out of the man's numbed fingers.

"You mustn't hit people with things like this," he said reprovingly. "It hurts . . . Doesn't it?"

The intruder, with jagged stars shooting through his head, did not offer an opinion; but his squirming lost nearly all of its early vigour. The Saint sat on him easily, and made sure that there were no other weapons on his person before he stood up again.

The main lights clicked on with a sudden dazzling brightness. Patricia Holm stood in the doorway, the lines of her figure draping exquisite contours into the folds of a filmy neglige, her fair hair tousled with sleep and hazy startlement in her blue eyes.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't know you had company."

"That's all right,' said the Saint. "Were keeping open house."

He lounged back to rest the base of his spine against the edge of the table and inspected the caller in more detail. He saw a short-legged barrel-chested individual with a thatch of carroty hair, a wide coarse-lipped mouth, and a livid scar running from one side of a flattened nose to near the lobe of a misshapen ear; and recognition dawned in his gaze.

He waved his gun in a genial gesture.

"You remember our old pal and playmate, Red McGuire?" he murmured. "Just back from a holiday at Parkhurst after his last job of robbery with violence. Somebody told him about all those jewels we keep around, and he couldn't wait to drop in and see them. Why didn't you ring the bell, Red, and save yourself the trouble of carving up our door?"

McGuire sat on the floor and tenderly rubbed his head.

"Okay," he growled. "I can do without the funny stuff. Go on an' call the cops."

Simon considered the suggestion. It seemed a very logical procedure. But it left an unfinished edge of puzzlement still

in his mind.

There was something about finding himself the victim of an ordinary burglary that didn't quite ring bells. He knew well enough that his reputation was enough to make any ordinary burglar steer as far away from him as the landscape would allow. And serious burglars didn't break into any dwelling chosen at random and hope for the best, without even knowing the identity of the occupant—certainly not burglars with the professional status of Red McGuire. Therefore . . .

His eyes drained detail from the scene with fine-drawn intentness. Nothing seemed to have been touched. Perhaps he had arrived too quickly for that. Everything was as he had left it when he went to bed. Except—

The emptied packet of Miracle Tea which Patricia had bought for him that evening was still in his coat pocket. The packet which he had refilled for Teal's personal consumption was still on the table. . . . Or was it?

For on the floor, a yard from where Red McGuire had fallen, lay another identical packet of Miracle Tea.

Simon absorbed the jar of realisation without batting an eyelid. But a slowly increasing joy crept into the casual radiance of his smile.

"Why ask me to be so unfriendly, Red?" he drawled. "After all, what's a packet of tea between friends?"

If he needed any confirmation of his surmise, he had it in the way Red McGuire's small green eyes circled the room and froze on the yellow carton beside him before they switched furtively back to the Saint's face.

"Wot tea?" McGuire mumbled sullenly.

"Miracle Tea," said the Saint gently. "The juice that pours balm into the twinging tripes. That's what you came here for tonight, Red. You came here to swipe my beautiful packet of gut-grease and leave some phony imitation behind instead!"

McGuire glowered at him stubbornly.

"I dunno wot yer talkin' abaht.'

"Don't you?" said the Saint, and his smile had become almost affectionate. "Then you're going to find the next half-hour tremendously instructive."

He straightened up and reached over for a steel chair that stood close to him, and slid it across in the direction of his guest.

"Don't you find the floor rather hard?" he said. "Take a pew and make yourself happy, because it looks as if we may be in for a longish talk."

A wave of his gun added a certain amount of emphasis to the invitation, and there was a

crispness in his eyes that carried even more emphasis than the gun.

McGuire hauled himself up hesitantly and perched on the edge of the chair. And the Saint beamed at him.

"Now if you'll look in the top drawer of the desk, Pat—I think there's quite a collection of handcuffs there. About three pairs ought to be enough. One for each of his ankles, and one to fasten his hands behind him."

McGuire shifted where he sat.

"Wot's the idea?" he demanded uneasily.

"Just doing everything we can to make you feel at home," answered the Saint breezily. "Would you mind putting your hands behind you so that the lady can fix you up? . . . Thanks ever so much . . . Now if you'll just move your feet back up against the legs of the chair——"

Rebellious rage boiled behind the other's sulky scowl, a rage that had its roots in a formless but intensifying fear. But the Saint's steady hand held the conclusive argument, and he kept that argument accurately aligned on McGuire's wishbone until the last cuff had been locked in place and the strong-arm expert was shackled to the steel chair-frame as solidly as if he had been riveted on to it.

Then Simon put down his automatic and languidly flipped open his cigarette-box.

"I hate to do this to you," he said conversationally, "but we've really got to do something about that memory of yours. Or have you changed your mind about answering a few questions?"

McGuire glared at him without replying.

Simon touched a match to his cigarette and glanced at Patricia through a placid trail of smoke.

"Can I trouble you some more, darling? If you wouldn't mind plugging in that old electric curling-iron of yours——"

McGuire's eyes jerked, and the handcuffs clinked as he strained against them.

"Go on, why don't yer call the cops?" he blurted hoarsely. "You can't do anything to me!"

The Saint strolled over to him.

"Just who do you think is going to stop me?" he asked kindly.

He slipped his hands down inside McGuire's collar, one on each side of the neck, and ripped his shirt open clear to the waist with one swift wrench that sprung the buttons pringing across the room like bullets.

"Get it good and hot, darling," he said over his shoulder, "and we'll see how dear old Red likes the hair on his chest waved."

Red McGuire stared up at the Saint's gentle smile and ice-cold eyes, and the breath stopped in his throat. He was by no means a timorous man, but he knew

when to be afraid—or thought he did.

"You ain't given me a chance, guv'nor," he whined. "Why don't yer arsk me somethink I can answer? I don't want to give no trouble."

Simon turned away from him to flash a grin at Patricia—a grin that McGuire was never meant to see.

"Go ahead and get the iron, sweetheart," he said, with blood-curdling distinctness, and winked at her. "Just in case old dear Red changes his mind."

Then the wink and the grin vanished together as he whipped round on his prisoner.

"All right," he snapped. "Tell me all you know about Miracle Tea!"

"I dunno anythink about it, so help me, guv'nor. I never heard of it before tonight. All I know is I was told to come here wiv a packet, an' if I found another packet here I was to swap them over an' bring your packet back. That's all I know about it, strike me dead if it ain't."

"I shall probably strike you dead if it is," said the Saint coldly. "D'you mean to tell me that Comrade Osbett didn't say any more than that?"

"Who's that?"

"I said Osbett. You know who I'm talking about."

"I never heard of 'im."

Simon moved towards him with one fist drawn back.

"That's Gawd's own truth!" shouted McGuire desperately. "I said I'd tell yer anythink I could, didn't I? It ain't my fault if I don't know everything——"

"Then who was it told you to come here and play tea-parties?"

"I dunno . . . Listen!" begged McGuire frantically. "This is a squeal, ain't it? Well, why won't yer believe me? I tell yer, I don't know. It was someone who met me when I come out of stir. I dunno wot is name is, an' in this business yer don't arsk questions. He ses to me, would I like fifty quid a week to do any dirty work there is going, more er less. I ses, for fifty quid a week I'll do anything he can think of. So he gives me twenty quid on account, an' tells me to go anywhere where there's a telephone an' just sit there beside it until he calls me. So tonight he rings up——"

"And you never knew who he was?"

"Never in me life, strike me dead——"

"How do you get the rest of your money?"

"He just makes a date to meet me somewhere an' hands it over."

"And you don't even know where he lives?"

"So help me, I don't. All I got is a phone number where I can ring him."

"What is this number?"

"Berkley 3100."

Simon studied him calculatingly. The story had at least a possibility of truth, and the way McGuire told it it sounded convincing. But the Saint didn't let any premature cameraderie soften his implacably dissecting gaze.

He said: "What sort of a guy is he?"

"A tall thin foreign-looking bloke wiv a black beard."

It still sounded possible Whatever Mr. Osbett's normal appearance might be, and whatever kind of racket he might be in, he might easily be anxious not to have his identity known by such dubiously efficient subordinates as Red McGuire.

"And exactly how," said the Saint, "did your foreign-looking bloke know that I had any miracles in the house?"

"I dunno——"

Patricia Holm came back into the room with a curling-iron that glowed dull red.

Simon turned and reached for it.

"You're just in time, darling," he murmured. "Comrade McGuire's memory is going back on him again."

Comrade McGuire gasped at the hot iron, and licked his lips.

"I found that out meself, guv'nor," he said hurriedly. "I was goin' to tell yer——"

"How did you find out?"

"I heard somethink on the telephone."

The Saint's eyes narrowed.

"Where?"

"In the fust house I went to—somewhere near Victoria Station. That was where I was told to go fust an' swop over the tea. I got in all right, but the bloke was there in the bedroom. I could hear 'im tossing about in bed. I was standin' outside the door, wondering if I should jump in an' cosh him, when the telephone rang. I listened to wot he said, an' all of a sudding I guessed it was about some tea, an' then once he called you 'Saint,' an' I knew who he must be talkin' to. So I got out again an' phoned the guv'nor an' told him about it; an' he ses, go ahead an' do the same thing here."

Simon thought back over his conversation with Mr. Teal; and belief grew upon him. No liar could have invented that story, for it hung on the fact of a telephone call which nobody else besides Teal and Patricia and himself could have known about.

He could see how the mind of Mr. Osbett would have worked on it. Mr. Osbett would already know that someone had interrupted the attempt to recover the package of tea from Chief Inspector Teal on his way home, that that someone had arrived in a car, and that he had presumably driven Teal the rest of the way after the rescue. If someone was phoning Teal later

about a packet of tea, the remainder of the sequence of accidents would only have taken a moment to reconstruct. . . . And when the Saint thought about it, he would have given a fair percentage of his fifteen hundred pounds for a glimpse of Mr. Obsett's face when he learned into what new hands the packet of tea had fallen.

He still looked at Red McGuire.

"How would you like to split this packet of tea with me?" he asked casually.

McGuire blinked at him.

"Blimey, guv'nor, wot would I do wiv arf a packet of tea?"

Simon did not try to enlighten him. The answer was enough to consolidate the conclusion he had already reached. Red McGuire really didn't know what it was all about—that was also becoming credible. After all, any intelligent employer would know that Red McGuire was not a man who could be safely led into temptation.

The Saint had something else to think about. His own brief introductory anonymity was over, and henceforward all the attentions of the ungodly would be lavished on himself — while he was still without one single solid target to shoot back at.

He sank into a chair and blew the rest of his cigarette into a meditative chain of smoke-rings; and then he crushed the butt into an ashtray and looked at McGuire again.

"What happens to your fifty-quid-a-week job if you go back to stir, Red?" he inquired deliberately.

The thug chewed his teeth.

"I s'pose it's all over with, guv'nor."

"How would you like to phone your boss now—for me?"

Fear swelled in McGuires eyes again as the Saint's meaning wore its way relentlessly into his understanding. His mouth opened once or twice without producing any sound.

"Ye carn't arsk me to do that!" he got out at last. "If he knew I'd double-crost 'im—he said—"

Simon rose with a shrug.

"Just as you like," he said carelessly. "But one of us is going to use the telephone, and I don't care which it is. If I ring up Vine Street and tell 'em to come over and fetch you away, I should think you'd get about ten years, with a record like yours. Still, they say it's a healthy life, with no worries—"

"Wait a minute," McGuire said chokily. "What do you do if I make this call?"

"I'll give you a hundred quid in cash; and I'll guarantee that when I'm through with your boss he won't be able to do any of those things he promised."

McGuire was no mathematician, but he could do simple arithmetic. He gulped something

out of his throat.

"Okay," he grunted. "It's a bet."

Simon summed him up for a moment longer, and then hauled his chair over to within reach of the table where the telephone stood. He picked up the microphone and prodded his forefinger into the first perforation of the dial.

"All you're going to do," he said, as he went on spelling out BER 3100, "is tell the big bearded chief that you've been through this place with a fine comb, and the only tea-leaf in it is yourself. Do you get it? No Saint, no tea—no soap. . . . And I don't want to frighten you or anything like that, Red, but I just want you to remember that if you try to say any more than that, I've still got you here, and we can easily warm up the curling-tongs again."

"Don't yer think I know wot's good for me?" retorted the other sourly.

The Saint nodded warily, and heard the ring of the call in the receiver. It was answered almost at once, in a sharp cultured voice with a slight foreign intonation.

"Yes? Who is that?"

Simon put the mouth piece to McGuire's lips.

"McGuire calling," said the burglar thickly.

"Well?"

"No luck, guv'nor. It ain't here. The Saint's out, so I had plenty of time. I couldn't 've helped findin' it if it'd been here."

There was a long pause.

"All right," said the voice curtly. "Go home and wait for further orders. I'll call you tomorrow."

The line went down with a click.

"And I wouldn't mind betting," said the Saint, as he put the telephone back, "that that's the easiest hundred quid you ever earned."

McGuire tugged impatiently at his manacles.

"Well, yer got wot yer wanted, did'nt yer?" he snarled. "Come on an' take orf these ruddy bracelets an' let me go."

The Saint shook his head.

"Not quite so fast, brother," he said. "You might think of calling up your boss again and having another chat with him before you went to bed, and I'd hate him to get worried at this hour of the night. You stay right where you are and get some of that beauty sleep which you need so badly, because after what I'm going to do tomorrow your boss may be looking for you with a gun!"

Early rising had never been one of the Saint's favourite virtues, but there were times when business looked more important than leisure. It was eleven o'clock

the next morning—an hour at which he was usually beginning to think drowsily about breakfast—when he sauntered into the apothecarium of Mr. Henry Osbett.

In honour of the occasion, he had put on his newest and most beautiful suit, a creation in pearl-grey fresco over which his tailor had shed tears of ecstasy in the fitting room; his piratically tilted hat was unbelievably spotless; his tie would have humbled the gaudiest hues of dawn. He had also put on, at less expense, a vacuous expression and an inanely chirpy grin that completed the job of typing him to the point where his uncle, the gouty duke, loomed almost visibly in his background.

The shifty-eyed young assistant who came to the counter might have been pardoned for kneeling over backwards at the spectacle; but he only recoiled half a step and uttered a perfunctory "Yes, sir?"

He looked nervous and preoccupied. Simon wondered whether this nervousness and preoccupation might have had some connection with a stout and agitated-looking man who had entered the shop a few yards ahead of the Saint himself. Simon's brightly vacant eyes took in the essential items of the topography without appearing to notice anything—the counter with its showcases and displays of patent pills and liver salts, the glazed compartment at one end where presumably prescriptions were dispensed, the dark doorway at the other end which must have led to the intimate fastnesses of the setablishment. Nowhere was the stout man visible; therefore, unless he had dissolved into thin air, or disguised himself as a bottle of bunion cure, he must have passed through that one doorway. . . . The prospects began to look even more promising than the Saint had expected. . . .

"This jolly old tea, old boy," bleated the Saint, producing a package from his pocket. "A friend of mine—chappie named Teal, y'know, great detective and all that sort of thing—bought it off you last night and then he wouldn't risk taking it. He was goin' to throw it down the drain; but I said to him 'Why waste a perfectly good half-dollar, what?' I said. 'I'll bet they'll change it for a cake of soap, or something,' I said. 'I'll take it in and change it myself,' I told him. That's right, isn't it. You will change it, won't you?"

The shifty-eyed youth was a bad actor. His face had gone white, then red, and finally compromised by remaining blotchy. He gaped at the packet as if he was really starting to believe that there were miracles in Miracle Tea.

"We—we should be glad to

change it for you, sir," he gibbered.

"Fine!" chortled the Saint. "That's just what I told jolly old Teal. You take the tea, and give me a nice box of soap. I expect Teal can use that, but I'm dashed if I know what he could do with tea——"

He was talking to a vanishing audience. The youth, with a spluttered "Excuse me, sir," had grabbed the package off the counter and was already making a dive for the doorway at the far end; and the imbecile grin melted out of the Saint's face like a wax mould from a casting of hot bronze.

One skeleton instant after the assistant had disappeared, he was over the counter with the swift silence of a cat.

But even if he had made any noise, it is doubtful whether the other would have noticed it. The shifty-eyed youth was so drunk with excitement that his brain had for the time being practically ceased to function. It it hadn't he might have stopped to wonder why Mr. Teal should have handed the tea to a third party; or why the third party, being so obviously a member of the idle rich, should have even bothered about exchanging it for a box of soap. He might have asked himself a great many inconvenient questions; but he didn't. Perhaps the peculiarly fatuous and guileless character which the Saint had adopted for the interview had something to do with that egregious oversight —at least, that was what Simon Templar had hoped for. . . . And it is at least certain that the young man went blundering up the stairs without a backward glance, while the Saint glided like a ghost into the gloomy passage-way at the foot of the stairs. . . .

In the dingy upper room which was the young man's destination, Mr. Osbett was entertaining the stout and agitated man. That is to say, he was talking to him. The agitated man did not look very entertained.

"It's no good cursing me, Nancock," Osbett was saying, in his flustered old-maidish way. "If you'd been on time last night—"

"I was on time!" yelped the perspiring Mr. Nancock. "It was that young idiot's fault for handing the package over without the password — and to Teal, of all people. I tell you, I've been through hell! Waiting for something to happen every minute—waiting, waiting. . . . It isn't even safe for me to be here now——"

"That's true," said Osbett, with one of his curiously abrupt transformations to deadly coldness. "Who told you to come here?"

"I came here because I want my money!" bawled the other hysterically. "What do you think

I've done your dirty work for? Do you think I'd have taken a risk like this if I didn't need the money? It is my fault if your fool of an assistant gives the money to the wrong man? I don't care a damn for your penny-dreadful precautions, and all this nonsense about signs and countersigns and keeping out of sight. What good has that done this time? I tell you, if I think you're trying to cheat me——"

"Cheat you?" repeated the chemist softly. The idea seemed to interest him. "Now, I wonder why you should be the first to think of that?"

There was a quality of menace in his voice which the stout man did not seem to hear. His mouth opened for a fresh outburst; but the outburst never came. The first word was on his lips when the door opened and the shifty-eyed youth burst in without the formality of a knock.

"It's Teal's—packet!" he panted out. "A man just came in and said he wanted to change it! He said—Teal gave it to him. It hasn't been opened!"

Nancock jumped up like a startled pig, with his mouth still open where the interruption had caught it. An inarticulate yelp was the only sound that came out of it.

Osbett got up more slowly.

"What sort of man?" he snapped, and his voice was hard and suspicious.

The youth wagged his hands vaguely.

"A silly-ass sort of fellow—Burlington Bertie kind of chap—I didn't notice him particularly ——"

"Well, go back and notice him now!" Mr. Osbett was flapping ditherily again. "Keep him talking. Make some excuse, but keep him there till I can have a look at him."

The assistant darted out again and went pelting down the stairs—so precipitately that he never noticed the shadow that faded beyond the doorway of the stockroom on the opposite side of the landing.

Osbett had seized the packet of tea and was feeling it eagerly. The suspicious look was still in his eyes, but his hands were shaking with excitement.

"It feels like it!" he muttered. "There's something funny about this——"

"Funny!" squeaked Nancock shrilly. "It's my money, isn't it? Give it to me and let me get out of here!"

"It will be lucky for you if it is your money,' Osbett said thinly. "Better let me make sure." He ripped open the package. There was no tea in it—only crumpled pieces of thin white paper. "Yes, this is it. But why . . . My God!"

The oath crawled through his lips in a tremulous whisper. He

looked as if he had opened the package and found a snake in his hands. Nancock, staring at him, saw that his face had turned into a blank grey mask in which the eyes bulged like marbles.

Osbett spread out the piece of paper which he had opened. It was not a banknote. It was simply a piece of perforated tissue on which had been stamped in red the drawing of a quaint little figure with straight lines for body and legs and arms and an elliptical halo slanted over his round featureless head. . . . Osbett tore open the other papers with suddenly savage hands. Every one of them was the same, stamped with the same symbolic figure. . . .

"The Saint!" he whispered.

Nancock goggled stupidly at the scattered drawings.

"I—I don't understand," he faltered, and he was white at the lips.

Osbett looked up at him.

"Then you'd better start thinking!" he rasped, and his eyes had gone flat and emotionless again. "The Saint sent this, and if he knows about the money——"

"Not 'sent', dear old Whiskers, not 'sent'," a coolly mocking voice corrected him from the doorway. "I brought it along myself, just for the pleasure of seeing your happy faces."

The Saint stood leaning against the jamb of the door, smiling and debonair.

The two men stood and gawped at him as if he had been a visitor from Mars. A gamut of emotions that must have strained their endocrine glands to bursting point skittered over their faces like foam over a waterfall. They looked as if they had been simultaneously goosed with high-voltage wires and slugged in the solar plexus with invisible sledge-hammers. Simon had to admit that there was some excuse for them. In fact, he had himself intentionally provided the excuse. There were certain reactions which only the ungodly could perform in their full richness that never failed to give him the same exquisite and fundamental joy that the flight and impact of a well-aimed custard pie gives to a movie audience; and for some seconds he was regaled with as ripe and rounded an exhibition of its kind as the hungriest heart could desire.

The Saint propped himself a little more comfortably against his backrest, and flicked a tiny bombshell of ash from his cigarette.

"I hope you don't mind my asking myself in like this," he remarked engagingly. "But I thought we ought to get together on this tea business. Maybe I could give you some new ideas. I was mixing a few odds and

ends together myself yesterday ——"

Credit must be given to Mr. Osbett for making the first recovery. He was light-years ahead of Nancock, who stood as if his feet had sunk into the floor above the ankles, looking as though his lower jaw had dislocated itself at its fullest stretch. In one sheeting flash of dazzling clarity it dawned upon him that the man who stood there was unarmed—that the Saint's hands were empty except for a cigarette. His mouth shut tight under the spreading plumes of his moustache as he made a lightning grab towards the inside of his coat.

"Really!" protested the Saint. "Weren't you ever taught not to scratch yourself in public?"

Osbett had just time to blink —once. And then he felt as if a cyclone had hit him. His fingers had not even closed on the butt of the automatic in his shoulder holster when he found himself full in the path of what seemed like a ton of incarnate dynamite moving with the speed of an express train. Something like a chunk of teak zoomed out of the cyclone and collided with his jaw; as if from a great distance, he heard it make a noise like a plank snapping in half. Then his head seemed to split open and let in a gash of light through which his brain sank down into cottony darkness.

The rest of him cannoned soggily into Nancock, bounded sideways, and cascaded over a chair. Osbett and the chair crashed to the floor together; and the stout man reeled drunkenly.

"Here," he began.

Perhaps he did not mean the word as an invitation, but it appeared to have that effect. Something possessed of staggering velocity and hardness accepted the suggestion and moved into his stomach. The stout man said "Oof!" and folded over like a jack-knife. This put his chin in line with another projectile that seemed to be travelling up from the floor. His teeth clicked together and he lay down quite slowly, like a collapsing concertina.

Simon Templar straightened his tie and picked up the cigarette which he had dropped when the fun started. It had not even had time to scorch the carpet.

He surveyed the scene with a certain shadow of regret. That was the worst of having to work quickly—it merely whetted the appetite for exercise, and then left nothing for it to expend itself on. However, it was doubtful whether Osbett and Nancock could ever have provided a satisfactory workout, even with plenty of time to develop it. . . . The Saint relieved Osbett of his gun, felt Nancock's pockets for a weapon and found nothing,

and then rose quickly as a scutter of footsteps on the stairs reminded him that he still had one more chance to practise his favourite uppercut. He leaped behind the door as the shifty-eyed assistant tumbled in.

The assistant was blurting out his news as he came.

"Hey, the fellow's disappeared——"

Simon toed the door away from between them and grinned at him.

"Where do you think he went to?" he inquired interestedly.

His fist jolted up under the youth's jaw, and the assistant sat down and unrolled himself backwards and lay still.

The Saint masaged his knuckles contentedly, and pulled a large roll of adhesive tape from his pocket. He used it to fasten the three sleeping beauties' hands and feet together, and had enough left to fasten over their mouths in a way that would gravely handicap any loquacity to which they might be moved when they woke up.

Not that they were showing any signs of waking up for some time to come, which was another disadvantage attached to the effectiveness of that sizzling uppercut. By all the symptoms, it would be quite a while before they were in any condition to start a conversation. It was an obstacle to further developments which Simon had not previously considered, and he scratched his head over it in a moment of indecision. As a matter of fact, he had not given much previous consideration to anything beyond that brief and temporarily conclusive scuff—he never made any definite plans on such occasions, but he had an infinite faith in impromptu action and the bountiful inspirations of Providence. Meanwhile, no harm would probably be done by making a quick and comprehensive search of the premises, or——

In the stillness of his meditation and the surrounding atmosphere of sleep, an assortment of sounds, penetrated to his ears from the regions downstairs. There was some forced and pointed coughing, an impatient shuffling of feet, and the tapping of a coin on plate glass. More business had apparently arrived, and was getting restive.

A faintly thoughtful tilt edged itself into his eyebrows. He glanced round the room, and saw a slightly grubby white coat hanging behind the door. In a moment he had slipped into it and was buttoning it as he skated down the stairs.

The customer was a fat and frowsy woman in a bad temper.

"Tike yer time, doncher?" she said scathingly. "Think I've got all die ter wiste, young man? You're new here, aintcher? Where's Mr. Osbett?"

"Some people, madam, prefer to call me fresh," replied the Saint courteously. "Mr. Osbett is asleep at the moment, but you may confide in me with perfect confidence."

"Confide in ye?" retorted the lady indignantly. "None o' your sauce, young feller! I want three pennyworth of lickerish an' chlorodeen lozenges, an' that's all. Young Alfs corf is awful bad agin this morning."

"That's too bad," said the Saint, giving the shelves a quick once-over, and feeling somewhat helpless. "Just a minute, auntie —I'm still finding my way around."

"Fresh," said the lady tartly, "is right."

Liquorice and chlorodyne lozenges were fairly easy. The Saint found a large bottle of them after a short search, and proceeded to tip half of it into a paper bag.

"'Ere, I don't want all that," yelped the woman. "Three pennyworth, I said!"

Simon pushed the bag over the counter.

"As an old and valued customer, please accept the extra quantity with Mr. Osbett's compliments," he said generously. "Threepence is the price to you, madam, and a bottle of cough mixture thrown in. Oh, yes, and you'd better give young Alf some cod-liver oil——"

He piled merchandise towards her until she grabbed up as much as she could carry and palpitated nervously out into the street. Simon grinned to himself and hoped he had not overdone it. If the news of his sensational bargain sale spread around the district, he would have his hands full.

During the lull that followed he tried to take a survey of the stock. He would be safe enough with proprietary goods, but if anyone asked for some more complicated medicine he would have to be careful. He had no grudge to work off against the neighbourhood at large; which was almost a pity.

The next customer required nothing more difficult than aspirin, and left the shop in a kind of daze when the Saint insisted on supplying a bottle of a hundred tablets for the modest price of twopence.

Simon took a trip upstairs and found that his three prizes had still failed to progress beyond the stage of half-conscious moanings and a spasmodic twitching of the lower limbs. He returned downstairs to attend to a small snotty-nosed urchin who was asking for a shilling tin of baby food. Simon blandly handed her the largest size he could see, and told her that Mr. Osbett was making special reductions that morning.

"Cool" said the small child,

and added a bag of peardrops to the order.

Simon poured out a pound of them – "No charge for that, Delilah—Mr. Osbett is giving pear-drops away for an advertisement"—and the small child sprinted out as if it was afraid of waking up before it got home.

The Saint lighted another cigarette and waited thoughtfully. Supplying everybody who came in with astounding qualities of Mr. Osbett's goods at cut-throat prices was amusing enough, admittedly, but it was not getting him anywhere. And yet a hunch that was growing larger every minute kept him standing behindthe counter.

Maybe it wasn't such a waste of time. . . . The package of Miracle Tea in which he had found fifteen hundred testimonials to the lavish beneficence of his guardian angel had come from that shop; presumably it had been intended for some special customer; presumably also it was not the only eccentric transaction that had taken place there, and there was no reason why it should be the last. Maybe no other miracles of the same kind were timed to take place that day; and yet . . .

Mr. Osbett's boxes of extra special toilet soap, usually priced at seven and sixpence, were reduced for the benefit of a charming young damsel to a shilling each. The charming damsel was so impressed that she tentatively inquired the price of a handsome bottle of bath salts.

"What, this?" said the Saint, taking the flagon down and wrapping it up. "As a special bargain this morning sweetheart, we're letting it go for sixpence."

It went for sixpence, quickly. The Saint handed over her change without encouraging further orders—as a matter of fact, he was rather anxious to get rid of the damsel, in spite of her charm and obvious inclination to be friendly, for a man with a thin weasel face under a dirty tweed cap already overdue for the dustbin had come in, and was earnestly inspecting a showcase full of safety razors and other articles which are less widely advertised. Quite obviously the man was not anxious to draw attention to himself while there was another customer in the shop; and while there was at least one perfectly commonplace explanation for that kind of bashfulness the Saint felt a spectral tingle of expectation slide over his scalp as the girl went out and Weasel Face angled over to the counter.

"I haven't seen you before," he stated.

His manner was flatly casual, but his small beady eyes flitted over Simon's face like flies hovering.

"Then you should be enjoying

the view," said the Saint affably.

"What can I sell you today. comrade? Hot water bottles? Shaving cream? Toothpaste? We have a special bargain line of castor oil——"

"Where's Ossy?'

"Dear old Ossy is lying down for a while—I think he's got a headache, or something. But don't let that stop you. Have you tried some of our Passion Flower lipstick, guaranteed to seduce at the first application?

The man's eyes circled around again. He pushed out a crumbled envelope.

"Give Ossy my prescription, and don't talk so much."

"Just a minute," said the Saint.

He took the envelope back towards the staircase and slit it open. One glance even in the dim light that penetrated there was enough to show him that whatever else the thin sheet of paper it contained might mean, it was not a prescription that any ordinary pharmacist could have filled.

He stuffed the sheet into his pocket and came back.

"Will you call again at six o'clock?' he said, and his flippancy was no longer obtrusive. "Ill have it ready for you then."

"Awright."

The beady eyes sidled over him once more, a trifle puzzledly, and the man went out.

Simon took the paper back into the dispensing room and spread it out under a good light. It was a scale plan of a building, with every detail plainly marked even to the positions of the larger pieces of furniture, and provided in addition with a closely-written fringe of marginal notes which to the Saint's professional scrutiny provided every item of information that a careful burglar could have asked for, and the first fascinating but still incomplete comprehension of Mr. Osbett's extraordinary business began to reveal itself to him as he studied it.

The simple beauty of the system made his pulses skip. Plans like that could be passed over in the guise of prescriptions; boodle, cash payments for services rendered, or almost anything else, could be handed over the counter enclosed in tubes of cold cream or packets of Miracle Tea; and it could all be done openly and with impunity even while other genuine customers were in the shop waiting to be served. Even if the man who did it were suspected and under surveillance, the same transactions could take place countless times under the very eyes of a watcher, and be dismissed as an entirely unimportant feature of the suspect's daily activities. Short of deliberate betrayal, it left no loophole through which Osbett himself

could be involved at all—and even that risk, with a little ingenuity, could probably be manipulated so as to leave someone like the shifty-eyed young assistant to hold the baby. It was fool-proof and puncture-proof—except against such an unforeseen train of accidents as had delivered one fatal package of Miracle Tea into Chief Inspector Teal's unwitting paws, and tumbled it from his pocket into Simon Templar's car.

The one vast and monumental question mark that was left was wrapped all the way round the mystery of what was the motive focus of the whole machinery.

A highly organised and up-to-date gang of thieves, directed by a Master Mind and operating with the efficiency of a big business? The answer seemed trite but possible. And yet . . .

All the goods he could see round him were probably as genuine as patent slimming salts and mouth washes can be—any special packages would certainly be kept aside. And there was nothing noticeably out of place at that time. He examined the cash register. It contained nothing but a small amount of money, which he transferred to a hospital collecting box on the counter. The ancient notes and invoices and prescriptions speared on to hook files in the dispensing compartment were obviously innocuous—nothing incriminating was likely to be left lying about there.

The first brisk spell of trade seemed to have fallen off, and no one else had entered the shop since the visit of Weasel Face. Simon went back upstairs, and investigated the room into which he had dodged when he followed the shifty-eyed youth up the stairs. He remembered it as having had the air of a storeroom of some kind, and he was right. It contained various large jars, packing-cases, and cardboard cartons labelled with assorted names and cryptic signs, some of them prosaically familiar, stacked about in not particularly methodical piles. But the whole rear half of the room, in contrasting orderliness, was stacked from floor to ceiling with mounds of small yellow packages that he could recognise at a glance.

He looked around again, and on one wall he found in a cheap frame the official certificate which announced to all whom it might concern that Mr. Henry Osbett had dutifully complied with the Law and registered the fact that he was trading under the business name of The Miracle Tea Company.

"Well, well, *well!*" said the Saint dreamily. "What a small world it is after all. . . ."

He fished out his cigarette-case and smoked part of the way through a cigarette while he

stood gazing abstractedly over the unilluminating contents of the room, and his brain was a whirlpool of new and startling questions.

Then he pulled himself together and went back to the office.

The three men he had left there were all awake again by then and squirming ineffectually. Simon shook his head at them.

"Relax, boys," he said soothingly. "You're only wearing yourselves out. And think what a mess you're making of your clothes."

Their swollen eyes glared at him mutely with three individual renderings of hate and malevolence intensified by different degrees of fear; but if the Saint had been susceptible to the cremating power of the human eye he would have been a walking cinder many years ago.

Calmly he proceeded to empty their pockets and examine every scrap of paper he found on them; but except for a driving license which gave him Mr. Nancock's name and address in Croydon he was no wiser when he had finished.

After that he turned his attention to the filing cabinet; but as far as a lengthy search could tell it contained nothing but a conventional collection of correspondence on harmless matters concerned with the legitimate business of the shop and the marketing of Miracle Tea. He sat down in Mr. Osbett's swivel chair and went systematically through the drawers of the desk, but they also provided him with no enlightenment. The net result of his labours was a magnificent and symmetrically rounded zero.

The Saint's face showed no hint of his disappointment. He sat for a few seconds longer, tilting himself gently back and forth; and then he stood up.

"It's a pity you don't keep more money on the premises, Henry," he remarked. "You could have saved yourself a stamp."

He picked up a paper-knife from the desk and tested the blade with his thumb. It was sharp enough. The eyes of the bound men dilated as they watched him.

The Saint smiled.

"From the way you were talking when I first came in, it looks as if you know my business," he said. "And I hope you've realised by this time that I know yours. It isn't a very nice business; but that's something for you to worry about. All I'm concerned with is to make sure that you pay the proper luxury tax to the right person, which happens to be me. So will you attend to it as soon as possible, Henry? I should think about ten thousand pounds will do for a first instalment. I shall expect it in one-

pound notes, delivered by messenger before two-thirty p.m. tomorrow. And it had better not be late." The Saint's blue eyes were as friendly as frozen vitriol. "Because if it is, Chief Inspector Teal will be calling here again—and next time it won't be an accident. . . . Meanwhile' — the knife spun from his hands like a whirling white flame, and the three men flinched wildly as the point buried itself with a thud in the small space of carpet centrally between them—"if one of you gets to work with that, you ought to be up and about again in a few minutes. Goodbye, girls; and help yourself to some sal volatile when you get downstairs."

It was nearing one o'clock by his watch when he reached the street; and Patricia was ordering herself a second Martini when he strolled into the cocktail room at Quaglino's.

She leaned back and closed her eyes.

"I know," she said. "Teal and the Flying Squad are about two blocks behind you. I can tell by the smug look on your face."

"For once in your life you're wrong," he said as he lowered himself into a chair. "They're so far behind that if Einstein is right they ought to have been here an hour ago."

Over lunch he gave her an account of his morning.

"But what *is* it all about?" she said.

He frowned.

"I just wish I knew, darling. But it's something bigger than burglary—you can take bets on that. If Henry Osbett is the Miracle Teapot in person, the plot is getting so thick you could float rocks on it. If I haven't got mixed on what Claud Eustace told me last night, they run a radio program, and that costs plenty of dough and trouble. No gang of burglars would bother to go as far as that ,even to keep up appearances. Therefore this is some racket in which the dough flows like water; and I wish I could think what that could be. And it's run by experts. In the whole of that shop there wasn't a single clue. I'll swear that Claud Eustace himself could put it through a sieve and not find anything. . . . I *was* bluffing Henry, of course, but I think I made a good job of it."

"You don't think he'll pay, do you?"

"Stranger things have happened," said the Saint hopefully. "But if you put it like that—no. That was just bait. There wasn't anything else useful that I could do. If I'd had them somewhere else I might have beaten it out of them, but I couldn't do it there, and I couldn't put them in a bag and bring them home with me. Anyhow, this may be a better way. It means that the

next move is up to the ungoodly, and they've got to make it fast. And that may give us our break."

"Of course it may," she agreed politely. "By the way, where did you tell me once you wanted to be buried?"

He chuckled.

"Under the foundation stone of a brewery," he said. "But don't worry. I'm going to take a lot of care of myself."

His idea of taking care of himself for that afternoon was to drive the Hirondel down to the factory at an average speed of about sixty miles an hour to discuss the installation of a new type of supercharger designed to make the engine several degrees more lethal than it was already, and afterwards to drive back to London at a slightly higher speed in order to be punctual for his appointment with Mr. Teal. Considering that ride in retrospect, he sometimes wondered whether he would have any chance of claiming that the astounding quality of care which it showed could be credited entirely to his own inspired forethought.

It was on the stroke of four when he sailed into the May Fair and espied the plump and unromantic shape of Chief Inspector Teal dumped into a pink brocade armchair and looking rather like a bailiff in a boudoir.

Teal got up as the Saint breezed towards him; and something in the way he straightened and stood there almost checked Simon in the middle of a stride. Simon forced himself to keep coming without a flaw in the smooth surface of his outward tranquillity; but a sixth sense was rocketing red danger signals through his brain even before he heard the detective's unnaturally hard gritty voice.

"I've been waiting for you, Saint!"

"Then you must have been early, Claud," said the Saint. His smile was amiable and unruffled, but there was an outlaw's watchfulness at the back of his bantering eyes. "Is that any excuse for the basilisk leer? Anyone would think you'd eaten something——"

"I don't want to hear any more of that," Teal said crunchily. "You know damned well why I'm waiting for you. Do you know what this is?'

He flourished a piece of paper in Simon's face.

The Saint raised his eyebrows.

"Not another of those jolly old warrants?" he murmured. "You must be getting quite a collection of them."

"I'm not going to need to collect any more," Teal said grimly. "You went too far when you left your mark on the dead man you threw out of your car in Richmond Park this afternoon.

I'm taking you into custody on a charge of wilful murder!"

Simon took Mr. Teal by the arm and led him back to a seat. He was probably the only man in the world who could have got away with such a thing, but he did it without the faintest sign of effort. He switched on about fifty thousand watts of his personality, and Mr. Teal was sitting down beside him before he recovered from it.

"Damn it, Templar, what the hell do you think you're doing?" he exploded wrathfully. "You're under arrest?!"

"All right, I'm under arrest," said the Saint accommodatingly, as he stretched out his long legs. "So what?"

"I'm taking you into custody ——"

"You said that before. But why the hurry? It isn't early closing day at Vine Street, is it? Let's have our tea first, and you can tell me all about this bird I'm supposed to have moidered. You say he was thrown out of a car ——"

"Your Hirondel!"

"But why mine? After all, there are others. I don't use enough of them to keep the factory going by myself."

The detective's jows clamped on his chewing gum.

"You can say all that to the magistrate in the morning," he retorted dourly. "It isn't my job to listen to you. It's my job to take you to the nearest police station and leave you there, and that's what I'm going to do. I've got a car and a couple of men at each of the entrances, so you'd better not give any trouble. I had an idea you'd be here at four o'clock——"

"So I spent the afternoon moidering people and chucking them out of cars, and then rush off to meet you so you needn't even have the trouble of looking for me. I even use my own famous Hirondel so that any cop can identify it, and put my trademark on the deceased to make everything easy for the prosecution. You know, Claud," said the Saint pensively, "there are times when I wonder whether I'm quite sane."

Teal's baby blue eyes clung to him balefully.

"Go on," he grated. "Let's hear the new alibi. It'll give me plenty of time to get it torn down before you come up for trial!'

"Give me a chance," Simon protested. "I don't even know what time I'm supposed to have been doing all these exciting things."

"You know perfectly well——"

"Never mind. You tell me, and let's see if we agree. What time did I sling this stiff out of my car?"

"A few minutes after three—and he was only killed a few

minutes before that."

The Saint opened his cigarette case.

"That rather tears it," he said slowly; and Teal's eyes kindled with triumph.

'So you weren't quite so smart ——"

"Oh, no," said the Saint diffidently. "I was just thinking of it from your point of view. You see, just at that time I was at the Hirondel factory at Staines, talking about a new blower that I'm thinking of having glued on to the old buzz-wagon. We had quite a conference over it. There was the works manager, and the service manager, and the shop foreman, and a couple of mechanics thrown in, so far as I remember. Of course, everybody knows that the whole staff down there is in my pay, but the only thing I'm worried about is whether you'll be able to make a jury believe it."

A queerly childish contraction warped itself across Mr. Teal's rubicund features. He looked as if he had been suddenly seized with an acute pain below the belt, and was about to burst into tears.

Both of these diagnoses contained a fundament of truth. But they were far from telling the whole story.

The whole story went too far to be compressed into a space less than volumes. It went far back into the day when Mr. Teal had been a competent and contented and commonplace detective, adequately doing a job in which miracles did not happen and the natural laws of the universe were respected and cast-iron cases were not being perennially disintegrated under his nose by a bland and tantalising buccaneer whose elusiveness had almost started to convince him of the reality of black magic. It coiled through an infinite history of incredible disasters and hairbreath frustrations that would have wrung the withers of anything softer than a marble statue. It belonged to the hysterical saga of his whole hopeless duel with the Saint.

Mr. Teal did not burst into tears. Nor, on this one unprecedented occasion, did he choke over gum while a flush of apoplectic fury boiled into his round face. Perhaps there were no more such reactions left in him; or perhaps on this one occasion an inescapable foreboding of the uselessness of it all strangled the spasm before it could mature and gave him the supernatural strength to stifle his emotions under the pose of stolid somnolence that he could so rarely preserve against the Saint's fiendishly shrewd attack. But however he achieved the feat, he managed to sit quite still while his hot resentful eyes bored into the Saint's smiling face for a time before he strug-

gled slothfully to his feet.

"Wait a minute," he said thickly.

He went over and spoke to a tall cadaverous man who was hovering in the background. Then he came back and sat down again.

Simon trickled an impudent streamer of smoke towards him.

"If I were a sensitive man I should be offended, Claud. Do you have to be quite so obvious about it when you send Sergeant Barrow to find out whether I'm telling you the truth? It isn't good manners, comrade. It savours of distrust."

Mr. Teal said nothing. He sat champing soporifically, staring steadfastly at the polished toe of his regulation boots, until Sergeant Barrow returned.

Teal got up and spoke to him at a little distance; and when he rejoined the Saint the drowsiness was turgid and treacle-thick on his pink full-moon face.

"All right," he bit out in a cracked voice, through lips that were stiff and clumpsy with the bitterness of defeat. "Now suppose you tell me how you did it."

"But I didn't do it, Claud," said the Saint, with a seriousness that edged through his veneer of nonchalance. "I'm as keen as you are to get a line on this low criminal who takes my trademark in vain. Who was the bloke they picked up this afternoon?"

For some reason which was beyond his understanding, the detective stopped short on the brink of a sarcastic comeback.

"He was an Admiralty draughtsman by the name of Nancock," he said; and the gauzy derision in the Saint's glance faded out abruptly as he realised that in that simple answer he had been given the secret of Mr. Osbett's remarkable chemistry.

It was as if a distorting mirror had been suddenly flattened out, so that it reflected a complete picture with brilliant and lifelike accuracy. The figures in it moved like marionettes.

Simon even knew why Nancock had died. He himself, ironically for Teal's disappointment, had sealed the fat man's death-warrant without knowing it. Nancock was the man for whom the fifteen-hundred-pound packet of Miracle Tea had been intended; Nancock had been making a fuss at the shop when the Saint arrived. The fuss was due to nothing but Nancock's fright and greed, but to suspicious eyes it might just as well have looked like the overdone attempt of a guilty conscience to establish its own innocense. Nancock's money had passed into the Saint's hands, the Saint had got into the shop on the pretext of bringing the same package back, and the Saint had said: "I know

all about your business." Simon could hear his own voice saying it. Osbett has made from that the one obvious deduction. Nancock had been a dead man when the Saint left the shop.

And to dump the body out of a Hirondel, with a Saint drawing pinned to it, was a no less obvious reply. Probably they had used one of his own authentic drawings, which had still been lying on the desk when he left them. He might have been doing any one of a dozen things that afternoon which would have left him without an alibi.

He had told Patricia that the next move was up to the ungodly, and it had come faster than he had expected. But it had also fulfilled all his other hopes.

"Claud," he said softly, "how would you like to make the haul of a lifetime?"

Teal sat and looked at him.

"I'll trade it," said the Saint, "for something that'll hardly give you any trouble at all. I was thinking of asking you to do it for me anyhow, in return for saving your life last night. There are certain reasons why I want to know the address where they have a telephone number Berkeley 3100. I can't get the information from the telephone company myself, but you can. I'll write it down for you." He scribbled the figures on a piece of paper. "Let me know where that number lives, and I'll give you your murderer and a lot more."

"What's this got to do with it?" he demanded.

"Nothing at all," said the Saint untruthfully. "So don't waste your time sleuthing around the place and trying to pick up clues. It's just some private business of my own. Is it a sale?"

The detective's eyes hardened.

"Then you do know something about all this!"

"Maybe I'm just guessing. I'll be able to tell you later. For once in your life, will you let me do you a good turn without trying to argue me out of it?"

Mr. Teal fought with himself. And for no reason that he could afterwards justify to him, he said grudgingly: "All right. Where shall I find you?"

"I'll stay home till I hear from you." Simon stood up, and suddenly remembered for the first time why he was there at all. He pulled a yellow package out of his pocket and dropped it in the detective's lap. "Oh yes. And don't don't forget to take some of this belly balm as soon as you get the chance. It may help you to get back that sweet disposition you used to have, and stop you being so ready to think unkind thoughts about me."

On the way home he had a few qualms about the ultimate wisdom of that parting gesture,

but his brain was too busy to dwell on them. The final patterns of the adventure were swinging into place with the regimented precision that always seemed to come to his episodes after the most chaotic beginnings, and the rhythm of it was like wine in his blood.

He had made Teal drive slowly past Cornwall House with him in a police car, in case there were any watchers waiting to see whether the attempt to saddle him with Nancock's murder would be successful. From Cannon Row police station, which is also a rear exit from Scotland Yard, he took a taxi back to his apartment, and stopped at a newsagent's on the way to buy a copy of a certain periodical in which he had hitherto taken little interest. By the time he got home it had given him the information he wanted.

Sam Outrell, the janitor, came out from behind the desk as he entered the lobby.

"Those men was here, sir, about two hours ago, like you said they would be," he reported. "Said you'd sent 'em to measure the winders for some new curtains. I let 'em in like you told me, an' they went through all the rooms."

"Thanks a lot, Sam," said the Saint, and rode up in the lift with another piece of his mosaic settled neatly into place.

He came into the living-room like a ray of sunshine and spun his hat over Patricia's head into a corner.

"Miracle Tea is on the air in about ten minutes," he said, "with a program of chamber music. Could anything be more appropriate?"

"I suppose you've heard about our curtain measurers."

"Sam Outrell told me. Do I get my diploma in advanced prophetics? After the party I had this morning, I knew it wouldn't be long before someone wanted to know what had happened to Comrade McGuire. Did you get him to Weybridge in good condition?"

"He didn't seem to like being locked in the trunk of the Daimler very much."

The Saint grinned, and sat down at the desk to dismantle his automatic. He opened a drawer and fished out brushes and rags and cleaning oil.

"Well, I'm sure he preferred it to being nailed up in a coffin," he said callously. "And he's safe enough there with Orace on guard. They won't find him in the secret room, even if they do think of looking down there . . . Be a darling and start tuning in Radio Calvados, will you?"

For a short while she was busy with the dials of the radiogram; and then she came back and watched him in silence while he went over his gun with the loving care of a man who

knew how much might hang on the light touch of a trigger.

"Something else has happened," she said at last. "And you're holding out on me."

Simon squinted complacently up a barrel like burnished silver, and snapped the sliding jacket back into place. There was a dynamic exuberance in his repose that no artist could have captured, an aura of resilient swiftness poised on a knife-edge of balance that sent queer little feathery ripples up her spine.

"A lot more is going to happen," he said. "And then I'll tell you what a genius I am."

She would have made some reply; but suddenly he fell into utter stillness with a quick lift of his hand.

Out of the radio, which had been briefly silent, floated the opening bars of the *Spring Song*. And his watch told him that it was the start of the Miracle Tea Company's contribution to the load that the twentieth-century ether has to bear.

Shortly the music faded to form a background for a delicate Oxford a c c e n t informing the world that this melody fairly portrayed the sensations of a sufferer from indigestion after drinking a nice big cup of Miracle Tea. There followed an unusually nauseating dissertation on the manifold virtues of the product, and then a screeching slaughter of the Grand March from *Tannhauser* played by the same string quartet. Patricia got up pallidly and poured herself out a drink.

"I suppose we do have to listen to this?" she said.

"Wait," said the Saint.

The rendition came to its awful end, and the voice of Miracle Tea polluted the air once again.

"Before we continue our melody program, we should like to read you a few extracts from our file of unsolicited letters from sufferers who have tried Miracle Tea. Tonight we are choosing letters one thousand and six, one thousand and fourteen, and one thousand and twenty-seven . . ."

The unsolicited letters were read with frightful enthusiasm, and the Saint listened with such intentness that he was obviously paying no attention to the transparently bogus effusions. He sat with the gun turning gently in his hands and a blindingly beatific smile creeping by hesitant degrees into the lines of his chiselled fighting mouth, so that the girl looked at him in uncomprehending wonderment.

". . . And there, ladies and gentlemen, you have the opinions of the writers whose letters are numbered one thousand and six, one thousand and fourteen, and one thousand and twenty-seven in our files," said the voice of the announcer, speaking with tedious deliberation. "These good

people cured themselves by drinking Miracle Tea. Let me urge you to buy Miracle Tea—tonight. Buy Miracle Tea! . . . And now the string quartet will play *Drink to Me Only*—"

There were two more short numbers and the broadcast was over. Simon switched off the radio as the next advertiser plunged into his act.

"Well," said Patricia mutinously, "are you going to talk?"

"You heard as much as I did."

"I didn't hear anything worth listening to."

"Nor did I. That's the whole point. There wasn't a n y t h i n g worth listening to. I was looking for an elaborate coded message. An expert like me can smell a code message as far off as a venerable gorgonzola — there's always a certain clumsiness in the phrasing. This was so simple that I nearly missed it."

Patricia gazed into the depths of her glass.

She said: "Those numbers—"

He nodded.

"The 'thousand' part is just coverage. Six, fourteen, a n d twenty-seven are the operative words. They have to buy Miracle Tea—tonight. Nothing else in the program means a thing. But according to that paper I brought in, Miracle Tea broadcasts every night of the week; and that means that any night the Big Shot wants to he can send out a call for the men he wants to come and get their orders or anything else that's waiting for them. It's the last perfect touch of organization. There's no connecting link that any detective on earth could trace between a broadcast and any particular person who listens to it. It means that even if one of his operatives should be under suspicion, the Big Shot can contact him without the shadow of a chance of transferring suspicion to himself. You could think of hundreds of ways of working a few numbers into an advertising spiel, and I'll bet they have a new one every time."

She looked at him steadily.

"But you still haven't told me what—"

The telephone rang before he could answer.

Simon picked it up.

"Metropolitan Police Maternity Home," he said.

"Teal speaking," said a familiar voice with an unnecessarily pugnacious rasp in it. "I've got the information you asked for about that phone number. The subscriber is Baron Inescu, 16 North Ashley Street, Berkeley Square. Now what was that information you were going to give me in return?"

The Saint unpuckered his lips from a long inaudible whistle.

"Okay, Claud," he said, and the words lilted. "I guess you've earned it. You can start right now. Rush one of your squads to

Osbett's Drug Store, 909 Victoria Street — the place where you bought your Miracle Tea. Three other guys will be there shopping for Miracle Tea at any moment from now on. I can't give you any description of them, but there's one sure way to pick them out. Have one of your men go up to everyone who comes out of the shop and say. 'Are you six, fourteen, or twenty-seven?" If the guy jumps halfway out of his skin, he's one of the birds you want. And see that you get his Miracle Tea as well!"

"Miracle Tea!" sizzled the detective, with such searing savagery that the Saint's ribs suddenly ached with awful intuition. "I wish——" He stopped. Then he said: "What's this about Miracle Tea? Are you trying to be funny?"

"I was never so serious in my life, Claud. Get those three guys, and get their packets of Miracle Tea. You'll find something interesting in them."

Teal's silence reeked of tormented indecision.

"If I thought——"

"But you never have, Claud. Don't spoil your record now. Just send that Squad out and tell 'em to hustle. You stay by the telephone, and I ought to be able to call you within an hour to collect the Big Shot."

"But you haven't told me——" Again Teal's voice wailed off abruptly. Something like a stifled groan squeezed into the gap. He spoke again in a fevered gabble. "All right, all right I'll do it. I can't stop now to argue but God help you——"

The connection clicked off even quicker than the sentence could finish.

Simon fitted his automatic into the spring clip holster under his coat, and stood up with a slow smile of ineffable impishness creeping up to his eyes.

16 North Ashley Street stood in the middle of one of those rows of crowded but discreetly opulent dwellings which provide the less squalid aspect of certain parts of Mayfair. Lights could be seen in some of the windows, indicating that someone was at home; but the Saint was not at all troubled about that. It was, in fact, a stroke of luck which he had hoped for.

He stepped up to the front door with the easy aplomb of an invited guest, arriving punctually for dinner, and put his finger on the bell. He looked as cool as if he had come straight off the ice, but under the rakish brim of his hat the hell-for-leather mischief still rollicked in his eyes. One hand rested idly between the lapels of his coat, as if he were adjusting his tie . . . .

The door opened, exposing a large and overwhelming butler. The Saint's glance weighed him

with expert penetration. Butlers are traditionally large and overwhelming, but they are apt to run large in the wrong places. This butler was large in the right places. His shoulders looked as wide as a wardrobe, and his biceps stretched tight wrinkles into the sleevs of his well-cut coat.

"Baron Inescu?" inquired the Saint pleasantly.

"The Baron is not——"

Simon smiled, and pressed the muzzle of his gun a little more firmly into the stomach in front of him. The butler recoiled, and the Saint stepped after him. He pushed the door shut with his heel.

"Turn 'round."

Tensely the butler started to obey. He had not quite finished the movement when Simon lifted his gun and jerked it crisply down again. The barrel made a sharp smacking sound on the back of the butler's bullet head; and the result, from an onlooker's point of view, was quite comical. The butler's legs bowed outwards, and he rolled down on to his face with a kind of resigned reluctance, and lay motionless.

For a second the Saint stood still, listening. But except for that single clear-cut smack there had been no disturbance, and the house remained quiet and peaceful.

Simon's eyes swept 'round the hall. In a corner close to the front door there was a door which looked as if it belonged to a coat cupboard. It was a coat cupboard. The Sain pocketed his gun for long enough to drag the butler across the marble floor and hove him in. He locked the door on him and took the key—he was a pretty accurate judge of the comparative toughness of gun-barrels and skulls, and he was confident that the butler would not be constituting a vital factor in anybody's life for some time.

He travelled past the other doors on the ground floor like a voyaging wraith, listening at each one of them, but he could hear no signs of life in any of the rooms beyond. From the head of the basement stairs he heard an undisturbed clink of dishes and mutter of voices which reassured him that the rest of the staff were strictly minding their own business.

In another moment he was on his way up the main staircase.

On the first wide landing he knew he was near his destination. Under one door there was a thin streak of light, and as he inched noiselessly up to it he heard the faint syncopated patter of a typewriter. Then the soft burr of a telephone interrupted it.

A voice said: "Yest . . . . Yes." There was a slight pause; then: "Vernon! Here is your copy for the special nine o'clock broadcast. Take it down. 'Why suffer

from indigestion when relief is so cheap? Two cups will make your pain vanish—only two. Four cups will set you on the road to a complete cure—so why not take four? But after sixteen cups you will forget that indigestion ever existed. Think of that. Sixteen cups will make you feel ten years younger. Wouldn't *you* like to feel ten years younger in a few days? Buy Miracle Tea—tonight!' . . . Have you got that . . . Splendid. Goodnight!"

The receiver rattled back. And the latch of the door ratled as Simon Templar closed it behind him.

The man at the desk spun 'round as if a snake had bitten him.

"Good evening, Baron," said the Saint.

He stood there smiling, blithe and elegant and indescribably dangerous.

The Baron stared frozenly back at him. He was a tall, clean-shaven man with dark hair greying at the temples, and he wore impeccable evening clothes with the distinction of an ambassador; but he had spoken on the telephone in a voice that was quite strangely out of keeping with his appearance. And the Saint's smile deepened with the joy of final certainty as he held his gun steadily alinged on the pearl stud in the centre of the Baron's snowy shirt-front.

The first leap of fear across the Baron's dark eyes turned into a convincing blaze of anger.

"What is the meaning of this?"

"At a rough guess, I should say about fifteen years—for you," answered the Saint equably. "It'll be quite a change from your usual environment, I'm afraid. That is, if I can judge by the pictures I've seen of you in the society papers. Baron Inescu driving off the first tee at St. Andrew's—Baron Inescu at the wheel of his yacht at Cowes—Baron Inescu climbing into his new racing monoplane. I'm afraid you'll find the sporting facilities rather limited at Dartmoor, Baron . . . or would you rather I called you—Henry?"

The Baron sat very still.

"You know a great deal, Mr. Templar."

"Just about all I need to know, I think. I know you've been running the most efficient espionage organisation that poor old Chief Inspector Teal has had to scratch his head over for a long time. I know that you had everything lined up so well that you might have got away with it for years if it hadn't been for one of those Acts of God that the insurance companies never want to underwrite. I told you I knew all about it this morning, but you didn't believe me. By the way, how does the jaw feel tonight?"

The other watched him unwinkingly.

"I'm afraid I did find it hard to believe you," he said evenly. "What else do you know?"

"I know all about your phoney broadcasts. And if it's of any interest to you, there will be a squad of large flat-footed bogeymen waiting for numbers six, fourteen, and twentyseven when they stop by for their Miracle Tea. . . . I also know that instead of getting ready to pay me the tax I asked for, you tried to frame me for the murder of Nancock this afternoon. And I resent that, Henry."

"I apologise," said the Baron suavely. "You shall have your money tomorrow——"

The Saint shook his head, and his eyes were glacially blue.

"You had your chance, and you passed it up. I shall help myself to the money." He saw the other's eyes shift fractionally to the safe in the corner, and laughed softly. "Give me the keys, Henry."

The Baron hesitated a moment before he moved.

Then he put his hand slowly into his trouser pocket and pulled out a bunch of keys on a platinum chain. He detached them and threw them on to the desk.

"You have the advantage, Mr. Templar," he said smoothly. "I give you the keys because you could easily take them yourself if I refused. But you're very foolish. There are only about three thousand pounds in the safe. Why not be sensible and wait until the morning?"

"In the morning you'll be too busy trying to put up a defence at the police court to think about me," said the Saint coldly.

He moved towards the desk; but he did not pick up the keys at once. His eyes strayed to the sheet of paper in the typewriter; and yet they did it in such a way that the Baron still knew that the first move he made would call shattering death out of the trim unwavering automatic.

Simon read:

In conjuction with numbers 4, 10, and 16 you will proceed at once to Cheltenham and establish close watch on Sir Roland Hale who is on holiday there. Within 24 hours you will send report on the method by which urgent War Office messages——

Simon's eyes returned to the Baron's face.

"What more evidence do you think Chief Inspector Teal will need?" he said.

"With a name like mine?" came the scornful answer. "When I tell them that you held me at the point of a gun while you wrote that message on my typewriter——"

"I'm sure they'll be very polite," said the Saint. "Especially when they find that yours are

the only fingerprints on the keys."

"If you made me write it under compulsion——"

"And the orders in the packets of Miracle Tea which numbers six, fourteen, and twentyseven are going to buy tonight came from the same machine."

The Baron moistened his lips.

"Let us talk this over," he said.

The Saint said: "You talk."

He picked up the telephone and dialled "O".

He said: "I want to make a call to France—Radio Calvados.

The Baron swallowed.

"Wait a minute," he said desperately. "I——"

"Incidentally," said the Saint, "there'll be a record that you had a call to Radio Calvados this evening, and probably on lots of other evenings as well. And I'm sure we shall find that Henry Osbett moustache of yours somewhere in the house—not to mention the beard you wore when you were dealing with Red McGuire. I suppose you needed some thug outside the organisation in case you wanted to deal drastically with any of the ordinary members, but you picked the wrong man in Red. He doesn't like hot curling-iron."

Inescu's fists clenched until the knuckles were bleached. His face had gone pale under its light tan.

The Saint's call came through.

"Mr. Vernon, please," he said.

He took out his cigarette-case, opened it, and lighted a cigarette with the hand that held his gun, all in some astonishing manner that never allowed the muzzle to wander for an instant from its aim on the Baron's shirt-stud; and then an unmistakable Oxford accent said: "Hullo?"

"Vernon?" said the Saint, and his voice was so exactly like the voice affected by Mr. Henry Osbett that its originator could scarcely believe his ears. "I've got to make a change in that copy I just gave you. Make it read like this: 'They say there is safety in numbers. In that case, you can't go wrong with Miracle Tea. There are many numbers in our files, but they all praise Miracle Tea. *Every number has the same message.* Why should you be left out? *All of you,* buy Miracle Tea tonight!' . . . Have you got it? . . . Good. See that it goes in without fail."

Simon pressed the spring bracket down with his thumb, still holding the microphone.

The Baron's stare was wide and stupefied.

"You're mad!" he said hoarsely. "You're throwing away a fortune——"

Simon laughed at him, and lifted the microphone to his ear again. He dialled the number of Scotland Yard.

"Give me Chief Inspector

Teal," he said. "The Saint calling."

There was some delay on the switchboard.

The Saint looked at Baron Inescue and said: "There's one thing you forget, Baron. I like money as much as anybody else, and I use more of it than most people. But that's a side line. I also deliver justice. When you get to Dartmoor, you'll meet some other men that I've sent there. Ask them about it. And then you in your turn will be able to tell the same story."

The voice of Chief Inspector Teal blared shortwindedly in his ear.

"Yes?"

"Oh, Claud? How's the old tum-tum getting—— . . . All right, if it's a sore subject; but I wondered—— . . . Yes, of course I have. Just a minute. Did you get six, fourteen, and twentyseven?" Simon listened, and the contentment ripened on his face. "Well, didn't I tell you? And now you can have some more for the bag. At any time after nine o'clock there's going to be a perfect stampede of blokes asking for Miracle Tea, so you can send your squad back for more. They'd better take over the shop and grab everyone who tries to buy Miracle Tea. And while they're doing that I've got the Big Shot waiting for you. Come and get him. The address is—— Excuse me."

The Saint had the telephone in one hand and a gun in the other, and it seemed impossible for him to have done it, but a narrow-bladed ivory-hilted knife stuck quivering in the desk half an inch from the Baron's fingers as they slid towards a concealed bell. And the Saint went on talking as if nothing had happened.

"Sixteen North Ashley Street, Berkeley Square; and the name is Inescu. . . . Yes, isn't that a coincidence? But there's all the evidence you'll need to make you happy, so I don't see why you should complain. Come along over and I'll show you."

"I'll send someone over," Teal said stiffly. "And thanks very much."

Simon frowned a little.

"Why send someone?" he objected. "I thought——"

"Because I'm busy!" came a tortured howl that nearly shattered the receiver. "I can't leave the office just now. I—I'll have to send someone."

The Saint's eyebrows slowly lifted.

"But *why*?" he persisted.

Eventually Mr. Teal told him.

Simon Templar sat on the desk in Chief Inspector Teal's office a fortnight later. The police-court proceedings had just concluded after a remand, and Baron Inescu, *alias* Henry Osbett, had been committed for trial in company with some

three dozen smaller cogs in his machine. The report was in the evening paper which Simon had bought, and he pointed it out to Teal accusingly.

"At least you could have rung me up and thanked me again for making you look like a great detective," he said.

Mr Teal strip-teased a slice of chewing gum and fed it into his mouth. "I'm sorry,' he said. "I meant to do it, but there was a lot of clearing-up work to do on the case. Anyway, its out of my hands now, and the Public Prosecutor is pretty satisfied. It's a pity there wasn't enough direct evidence to charge Inescu with the murder of Nancock, but we haven't done badly."

"You're looking pretty cheerful," said the Saint.

This was true. Mr. Teal's rosy face had a fresh pink glow, and his cherubic blue eyes were clear and bright under his sleepily drooping lids.

"I'm feeling better," he said. "You know, that's the thing that really beats met about this case. Inescu could have made a fortune out of Miracle Tea without ever going in for espionage——"

The Saint's mouth fell open.

"You don't mean to say——" he ejaculated, and couldn't go on. He said: "But I thought you were ready to chew the blood out of everyone who had anything to do with Miracle Tea, if you could only have got away from——"

"I know it was rather drastic," Teal said sheepishly. "But it did the trick. Do you know, I haven't had a single attack of indigestion since I took that packet, and I even had roast pork for dinner last night!"

Simon Templar drew a long deep breath and closed his eyes. There were times when even he felt that he was standing on holy ground.

NEXT MONTH –

IT WAS A JEWEL WHOSE SIZE AND BRILLIANCE MIGHT HAVE AWAKENED AVARICE IN AN ANGEL — OR EVEN IN A PROPERLY HALOED SAINT. BUT READ ABOUT IT IN —

THE ANGEL'S EYE

A SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS

–in the September issue of THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE

angel on my foot

by Manning Coles

Since it was May and the weather for once idyllic, Thomas Elphinstone Hambledon left London to its own devices and went to spend the Whitsun week-end at Weston Abbas, in Dorset, with old Colonel Marsh-Gibbon, whom he had known all his life. The estate was remote and unbelievably peaceful, the house was comfortable and staffed by retired soldiers from the Colonel's old regiment, the daily papers arrived at lunchtime and the Colonel addressed Hambledon as "my boy." It was all infinitely soothing. The talk was about old friends and the First World War; the Colonel had spent the Second as a private in the Home Guard.

On Saturday evening, after dinner, the Colonel suddenly abandoned the subject. "Do you like nightingales?" he said.

"Heavens above," said Hambledon slowly, "I don't believe I've heard a nightingale for thirty years. That's right. Not since my father died and I went home to clear our stuff out of the vicarage to make room for the new vicar. That was in May, of

---

During the past twenty-odd years we have followed, with awe and with admiration, the adventures of Thomas Elphinstone Hambledon, British Intelligence agent, in DRINK TO YESTERDAY, THE BASLE EXPRESS, DEATH OF AN AMBASSADOR, etc. And now, at long last, we meet him in THE SAINT.

Copyright 1960 by Manning Coles. Reprinted by permission of the author and the author's agents, Curtis Brown Ltd.

course, and there were always nightingales in our spinney."

"Fisher tells me"—Fisher was the butler—"that they're singing 'a fair treat, sir' in the church copse this week. What do you say to strolling along there later to see if they're doing their stuff? Do us good, have a stroll before we turn in, what?"

The church of Weston Abbas was a good half-mile outside the village, having once been an appendage of the Manor House which was burned to the ground in William IV's time and never rebuilt. Colonel Marsh-Gibbon and his guest strolled along the lane in the moonlight soon after eleven, their crepe-rubber soles making no sound, and before they turned in at a small side-gate of the churchyard the enchanted bird-song came to meet them.

"We'll walk t h r o u g h the churchyard, shall we? This path goes through the copse and there's a gate we can lean on," said the Colonel, his normally robust tones modified to suit either the consecrated surroundings or, possibly, the nightingales. Their path led along the south side of the small, ancient church to join the main drive from the lych-gate near the west door, and all round them headstones stuck out of the turf at varying angles. The Colonel waved his hand at them. "'The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep'," he remarked.

"No doubt," said Hambledon, "but there's someone over there who isnt sleeping. What the hell do they think they're doing?" He caught the Colonel's arm.

"My dear boy! Respect for sacred places—where?"

"Over there. Half-left beyond the drive, ten o'clock from that bird-bath thing, two men carrying something between them."

"Most irregular. R o b b e r s? Poachers? Stop them!"

The two men stepped off the grass on to the drive and turned towards the lych-gate with their burden. Hambledon shouted and began to run; the men started, and the next moment there was a dull thud. One man ran for the gate, but the other paused for a moment. There were two flashes, two sharp cracks, and two bullets whined and richocheted among the tombstones.

"Down!" cried Hambledon, and bore his old friend spluttering and cursing to earth.

"What—what—"

"He's off, too," said Hambledon, getting up. "Are you all right, Colonel?"

"All right? Dammit, I haven't been shot at since St.Quentin in '17. After them!"

The old gentleman scrambled to his feet, rushed along the path and turned down the main drive to the gate; a few yards further on he tripped over something and fell headlong.

"Colonel!" said Hambledon, almost afraid to touch him, "what happened—are you hurt?"

"No—ugh—fell over something. Help me up!"

"No bones broken?"

"Of course not," said the Colonel, nevertheless clinging to Hambledon's supporting arm. "Those fools left something lying on the path. Ought to be shot. Might have broken my neck."

From somewhere on the road, out of sight behind the churchyard hedge, there came the sound of a car being started and driven rapidly away.

"That, I imagine, is the panic party leaving," said Hambledon, helping Colonel Marsh-Gibbon to the bank at the side of the path. "Sit down a minute, Colonel, while I have a look at this obstruction."

The Colonel sank down upon the grassy bank as Hambledon turned his attention to the thing on the path.

"It's a headstone," he said. "One of those little stumpy ones."

"A headstone? Who the devil would want to go off with a headstone? What does it say on it?"

"It says," reported Hambledon, crouching over the stone in the moonlight, "In Loving Memory Of Elijah Windebank, aged 73, died September 11th—' "

"Old Windebank, the most arrant poacher in Dorset," said the Colonel. "Sent him inside a dozen times myself, but it didn't stop him. He just liked pheasant. Windebank, eh? But that stone's new, only been up a fortnight or so. His old wife had it put up. Waste of money for people like that, but it's no good telling 'em so. Haven't two pennies to rub together, but they must put up a tombstone. Question of prestige."

"Keeping up with the Joneses?"

"No Joneses here, all Parkers and Jackmans. But why would anyone want to steal a headstone, Hambledon?"

"I have not the dimmest scintilla of an idea . . . There's someone walking up the road now," said Hambledon, and went down to the lych-gate. It would be a good thing if it was someone who would take a message for the Colonel's car to come for him. At eighty-two one does not take tosses over tombstones with impunity. The footsteps proved to be those of the local constable, wheeling his bicycle.

"Good evening, officer," said Hambledon, stepping out of the shadows.

"Good evening, sir. Did you happen to hear a couple of shots fired a few minutes ago?"

"Seeing that they were fired at Colonel Marsh-Gibbon and myself, I certainly did."

"Fired at him? The old gentle-

man—is he hurt?"

"He wasn't hit, but he fell over a tombstone. Come over, will you? He's a bit shaken."

"I should think so," said the policeman indignantly, and left his bicycle at the lych-gate while he strode up the path.

"Good evening, Bowman," said the Colonel. "You've come at exactly the right moment. Someone's been stealing headstones. Look."

Bowman turned his torch on it.

"Windebank's. Why, old Thirza Windebank didn't have it put up only last week. Who'd want it and what for? Is that right they fired shots at you, sir?"

"At me and this gentleman here—Mr. Hambledon. He's staying with me. I don't think we were in much danger, pretty wild shooting, you know."

Bowman looked round him and Hambledon said that there were two men and that they had run away, after which a car had started up and gone off very fast. "You probably passed it, constable, it went the way you came."

"It nearly didn't pass me," said Bowman grimly. "Saw me coming and drove straight at me, so I took a header into the ditch." He turned his light upon a wet and muddy uniform jacket. "It's better to be dirty than dead."

"Did you get their number?"

"No, sir. They were driving on one spotlight only, no side or tail light. Did you see the car, sir?"

"Not a glimpse, it was behind that hedge."

The Colonel got up stiffly. "I think I'll stroll along home. The nightingales have all been scared off, anyway."

Hambledon looked at Bowman, who nodded and said he must be getting on; a moment later they heard him cycle away with peculiar clanging noises.

"I think his bicycle isn't what it was," said Hambledon. "That twanging sound suggests broken spokes to me."

"He's gone the wrong way," said the Colonel, stopping to listen. "He's going towards my house when he should have turned off along there."

Hambledon made no comment, but was not at all surprised when five minutes later the Colonel's ancient Rolls arrived to pick him up. There is something to be said for a military household.

They act.

Hambledon returned to London the following Tuesday and saw Chief-Superintendent Bagshott, who asked if he'd had a nice quiet week-end.

"Very nice," said Hambledon. "Marvellous weather. We went out to listen to the nightingales and got shot at."

"Who shot at you? The nightingales?"

Hambledon told him the story and Bagshott, turning over papers on his desk, said that it was very odd, for there had been a rather similar report from somewhere or other.

"Here it is. A report from a biggish cemetery near Ruislip that a man had complained that a small headstone, recently erected on the grave of his wife, was missing when he went to visit it on Sunday last. Last Sunday week, that would be now. The cemetery authorities said that it was there all present and correct on the Wednesday previous, a fortnight ago tomorrow, but it's a big place and there's a lot of work to be done in it. They don't go all over it every day."

"I suppose not."

"Why would anyone steal tombstones, Hambledon? That one in Dorset, was it a particularly choice specimen?"

"Not at all. Unusually small mass produced, a cheap line I should have said—though heaven knows I'm no connoisseur of gravestones. Bagshott, in view of the fact that it was I who was shot at, I think I'd like to have a further look into this—if only to find out why anybody not mentally afflicted should wish to purloin s u b s t a n d a r d tombstones."

Bagshott having provided full particulars, Hambledon went to the cemetery and called upon the the officials in charge. They gave him the name and address of the tombstone merchants who had erected the memorial and Hambledon went to see them.

"Inexplicable, sir, completely inexplicable. Never in all my forty-five years as a monumental mason, nor in my father's time before me, has such a thing been known to happen. And why, I ask myself? It is not as though the stone were intrinsically valuable, it was a cheap foreign importation. We do not care to handle goods of such inferior quality, but a certain class of customer—what does it matter after all? Their sense of bereavement is just as acute as that of families who mourn in polished granite. But why—"

"Do you import these stones yourselves?"

"Indeed no, sir. We obtain them from a wholesaler in India Dock Road; they are, as we understand, a new line. Made in Germany, sir. We had to wait some considerable time for delivery of the stone, most inconvenient."

"Got any more of them?"

"Oh no, sir. We would not lay in any stock of goods of that class. No, indeed."

"Oh. And the wholesaler's name?"

"Pettifinger and Griggs."

Hambledon made it his busi-

ness to run down to Weston Abbas to see whether Colonel Marsh-Gibbon had recovered completely. He had, and showed it by beating Hambledon decisively in a particularly merciless game of croquet. A savage game, croquet. After the massacre, Hambledon strolled into the village and met Constable Bowman.

"Any news of the car that tried to run you down, Bowman?"

"None, sir. Nobody don't seem to have noticed it which, considering I hadn't got the number and only a pretty poor description, is not what might be called surprising."

"Well, no. And the tombstone?"

"Being put back this afternoon, sir, as it so happens, by the undertakers as first put it up for old Thirza Windebank. Heaven, their name is, they come from Weston Minster."

"A nice consoling name for undertakers," suggested Hambledon.

"Hopeful, sir, yes. They were working on it when I passed the church just now."

Hambledon walked off towards the church. Mr. Heaven was of a cherubic countenance, if solemn in manner, and Hambledon liked him much better than the pompous person who looked after the cemetery from which the other stone was missing.

Mr. Heaven said it surely was a queer business, so it was. "Who'd want to steal a tombstone with someone else's name on it, for goodness' sake?"

"Nothing at all out of the ordinary about this stone?"

"No, sir, nothing at all so's you'd notice it—and yet in a sense you might say that there was."

"Tell me,' said Tommy Hambledon, parking himself upon an adjacent slab, "tell me, Mr. Heaven."

"Looks all right, don't it? But it isn't real stone, you know, it's synthetic. Made in Hamburg, Germany. I don't know how it's done, made out of granite dust and that, so they tell me.

"Anyway, the upshot is they're half the price of real stone ones, and that a consideration among the poor. I take it they're made in a mould and turned out to set; there's no tool marks on them and they come over all complete with 'In Loving Memory Of' along the top. All we have to do is put the name and date on it and set it up. Very popular in country districts where people don't earn the money they do in towns. I had to wait quite a while to get this one down, they said there was some delay."

"You import them yourself, Mr. Heaven?"

"Oh no, sir. I get them from Messrs. Pettifinger and Griggs in India Dock Road, London. In fact, I believe they're the only wholesalers as do supply them—something to do with import quotas and licences. I've ordered some more, they suit my trade."

After which, the obvious next step was to call upon Pettifinger and Griggs in the busy India Dock Road. They had a small shop-front complete with samples in the window, and a large dusty yard behind with a van entrance in a side road. Hambledon entered from the side road and found himself confronted with slabs and yet more slabs leaning closely against each other with twists of straw between them. Crosses there were also in a bewildering variety of shapes and sizes, and a marble scroll spread out upon a marble desk made Hambledon wonder whether it represented the Roll of Life Eternal or somebody's Last Will and Testament. There were obelisks and broken pillars, sundials and bird baths and even in these days still a few chubby and solemn cherubs with and without vestigial wings.

Hambledon checked momentarily and was then encouraged to proceed by the sound of someone whistling cheerfully, who proved to be a large, red-faced man busy ticking off tombstones on a list. He looked around as Hambledon came up to him.

"Good morning, sir?"

"Good morning," said Hambledon. "Messrs. Pettifinger and Griggs?"

"Well, yes, though actually my name's Potts. What can I do for you?"

Hambledon showed his official card. Potts took one inattentive look at it and gathered vaguely that his visitor was something official . . .

"Ah, yes. I expect you've come about my robbery, Mr.—ah—Hambledon? Very smart the police were, collaring those three men red-handed. I didn't know a thing about it till they got me out of bed to tell me."

"Actually—" began Hambledon.

"Though what the dickens they wanted with those nasty cheap German synthetic stones is quite beyond me. It isn't as though they'd taken a nice slab of red granite, or a nicely-marked piece of figured marble. No, they went for what I call sausage-stone – there were two already in the van and they were manhandling out a third when the cops dropped on them. Mental, I reckon."

"Am I right," said Hambledon, "in believing you to be the sole importer of these stones?"

"That's right. Though in point of fact I never had anything much to do with them. It was my foreman who heard about

them somewhere and suggested we should get in a few to see how they went. I remembered now, he saw them in Hamburg last year and made enquiries; being in the trade he was naturally interested. He was quite right, too, we sell them out pretty well as fast as we get them."

"Is he here now?"

"My foreman? No, that's why I'm messing about here doing a bit of elementary stock-taking. Nice young fellow, very smart. I've only had him—what—ten months. He's in hospital, worse luck, an angel fell on his foot and crushed it badly."

"An angel?"

"That's right. One of those old-fashioned marble ones that used to be so popular round the turn of the century. You know. Don't often get asked for them these days, not considered quite the thing. Though I'm pretty partial to a well-shaped angel myself."

Hambledon glanced at him, but Mr. Potts looked as though he had never heard of an *arriere pensee*.

"About this robbery," Potts continued, "I can't think of anything I haven't told the police already, but if there is anything more you want to know, let's go in my office."

"My visit has nothing to do with the robbery itself, though I am interested in those German tombstones your robbers were after. Have you got any more of them?"

Mr. Potts stared. "There must be more in them than meets the eye. Yes, I've got eight here and there're three the police have got as evidence, that's eleven. We've sold a tidy few here and there. I could tell you from the books."

"I expect I shall have to ask you to do that. At the moment, could I look at the eight you still have?"

"Over here," said Potts, and led the way to a stack of the little gravestones leaning upon one another in a quiet corner.

"Have they got identification numbers staped on them, probably on the bottom?"

Mr. Potts raised his voice. "Bill! 'Erb! Here a minute!"

Industrious noises stopped in a neighbouring shed and two men came out of a doorway, beating dust off themselves as they came.

"This gentleman," said Potts, "wants a closer look at those German synthetics there. Are there identification numbers on them?"

There were, stencilled on the bottoms, numbers in five figures. Hambledon look gratified and the two men set the first stone down.

"Another one, sir?"

"Yes, please"

Another number, a different one, showed that the stones were

marked individually and not merely with a type number.

"And another one, sir?"

"If you please. Are all these, in your opinion, the same weight?"

The two men looked at each other.

"So far, they're the same weight so near as makes no matter. Er, 'Erb?"

"That's right," said 'Erb.

But the next stone they lifted made them hesitate.

"This one's lighter than the others. Eh, 'Erb?"

"That's right."

"Put it aside," said Hambledon.

In the end, three of the headstones were lighter than the rest; not very much, but enough to be perceptible to the long experience of the two masons. They stood back and looked at Hambledon, and the deeply interested Potts said: "And now what?"

"I think, a flogging hammer."

Bill walked into the shed and came back with the heavy, long-handled hammer while Potts asked Hambledon what came next.

"You called this synthetic 'sausage-stone'. I think that some of them have rather odd ingredients. I am going to break up the bottom six or eight inches to see what pops out." Hambledon held out his hand for the hammer but the mason called Bill waved him away.

"We're more used to it than what you are."

"That's right,' said 'Erb.

Bill looked over the stone critically, eyed off the bottom edge, balanced the hammer in his hand and finally delivered a surprisingly light blow. The bottom of the stone obediently disintegrated and three round tins fell out, tall narrow round tins like short lengths of tube.

Hambledon picked up the tins.

"What on earth would they pack in those?" asked Potts. "Or do you reckon they're just to fill out, like?'

"No, I don't. As for what's in them, its something worth burgling your place for, isn't it? Can I use your telephone? I want to ring up the police. They can have this lot for closer examination."

"My foreman will be surprised, won't he? He's still interested in these stones although he's in hospital—he even sent a note out asking for a list of purchasers so as he could write follow-up letters. He is a darn good foreman, the best I ever had. I don't know why he doesn't start a business of his own. He seems to have plenty of money."

"This telephone," urged Hambledon.

"Of course, yes, come this way. He's got a marvellous car—

really fast sports—my boy can't take his eyes off it. Well, you know what schoolboys are. Here's the telephone," added Potts, leading the way into the shop. "I'll leave you to it."

He strolled tactfully away, leaving Hambledon to ring up Bagshott and report what he had found. "I thought you might wish to have the goods collected. In the meantime, I'll pick up one or two other items of news and then come and see you. We might go and take a bunch of grapes to the foreman's bed of pain, don't you think?"

Hambledon put down the telephone and went outside to find Potts.

"It's all laid on. The police will come and remove your sausage-stones. Just one or two questions and then I'll leave you in peace. Which hospital is your foreman in and what is his name?"

"His name is Woodman and he's in the East London Hospital."

"And have you by any chance got a photograph of him?"

"In the office, yes. My boy took it. Photography, that's one of his hobbies, and fast cars is another. Well, it's natural at his age. Here's the photograph."

It was a snapshot and a most successful one, brilliantly clear and sharp. It showed a dark young man looking up from the open bonnet of a sports car as though someone had come up and spoken to him.

"Quite excellent," said Hambledon, and studied it with the greatest interest because he recognized the face as that of a man who should have been in South America, having made Cairo too hot to hold him.

"Ah," said Hambledon. "Yes. Well, here comes the police."

"But," said Mr. Potts, "who will pay me for the stones?"

"I really couldn't say, offhand," said Tommy Hambledon blandly, "but the police will give you receipts for them. That ought to help, ought it not?" He smiled amiably, got into his car and drove away to Bagshott's office.

"Do you remember," said Hambledon, "a handsome young man in Cairo who had more aliases than any other man I've ever met? He had a German father, it was said, though upon what grounds I cannot imagine; his mother was half-Arab and half-Greek and so beautiful you couldn't believe your eyes. I saw her once. This young man now calls himself Woodman."

"He was run out of Cairo, even Cairo, for drug smuggling," said Bagshott. "Interpol had a good deal to say about him. I thought he went to South America."

"Who knows? He is now in the East London Hospital having

had an angel fall on his foot."

"A marble one, I suppose," said Bagshott coldly. "It's a pity she didn't fall on his head from fifty feet up. I shall go and talk to him myself if they'll let me, or at least post a man beside his bed. Are you coming?"

"Certainly. I cannot believe that a crushed foot would prevent Woodman from talking, though other considerations might. The trend of your questions, for example. Those tombstones which were being stolen from one place and another contained this. Here are three of them out of one stone. I haven't opened them."

Bagshott unscrewed the cap, saying as he did so: "If it is a white crystalline powder—it is! Splendid! The laboratory can have these. What gave you the idea, Hambledon?"

"Well, it was obvious, wasn't it? If those cheap and nasty tombstones deserved all that earnest endeavour, they must contain either drugs or diamonds."

"Let's go, shall we?" said Bagshott.

"By all means. No doubt all went well till the foreman had his accident and the blameless Potts took over the distribution. That was when the flap began," said Hambledon, following Bagshott along the Yard's passages. "Woodman in hospital got a list of satisfied customers and his assistants rushed down to Weston Abbas and dug up Elijah Windebank's marker only to be foiled by Colonel Marsh-Gibbon and guest. You will have to have it up again, I suppose—Thirza will be annoyed. They got away with the one out of the Ruislip cemetery, of course. There are also the three the police caught them with and three more I found. I should think that's the lot out of one consignment."

They reached the hospital only to be told that Mr. Woodman had been discharged that morning. He had been called for by a friend with a spectacular sports car. Woodman lived out near Epping Forest; the hospital supplied the address and the police car took Bagshott and Hambledon out there—but in vain. Mr. Woodman had just called in and gone off again.

Bagshott came back to the car and said that it meant putting out an all-stations call for Woodman.

"In the meantime," suggested Hambledon, "it's a lovely day, so let us enjoy the drive. What about taking a turn through Epping Forest? I don't believe I've ever—"

"No," said Bagshott.

"Oh, how costive of you."

Between Loughton and Walthamstow, Hambledon sat up suddenly, poked the police driver in the collar-bone and told

him peremptorily to pull in beside that car there, and the driver obeyed.

"That car there" was an Austin-Healey in crimson and cream. It was pulled up at the kerb and one of the three men in it was arguing with a police constable who had his notebook in his hand.

"Woodman's car," said Hambledon.

"And that's Woodman in the back with his foot up. Pull in alongside," ordered Bagshott.

The constable was saying that he was sorry, but this stretch of road was clearly marked as a no-parking area and who was the registered owner of this vehicle?

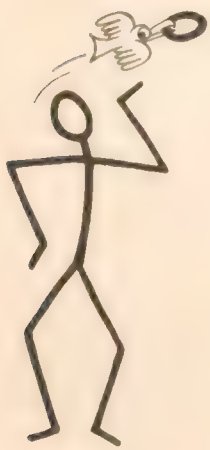
"I am," said Woodman, "and I have pulled up here because I've got a gammy foot, as you can see. Surely to goodness—"

He turned his head, saw Chief-Superintendent Bagshott not a yard away, and his jaw dropped.

"Scram!" he said. "Run!" But his two comrades were much too slow.

"And all this for parking in the wrong place," said Woodman bitterly.

NEXT MONTH –



THE MOUSETRAP
by MICHAEL INNES

REVENGE
by ANDREW GARVE

OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS
by PHILIP MacDONALD

LETTERS ARE POISON
by GEORGE HARMON COXE

THE LATE LAMENTED QUEEN
by JOHN PADDY CARSTAIRS

THE ANGEL'S EYE
by LESLIE CHARTERIS

and

The Adventure of the Whispering Knights
A NEW SOLAR PONS STORY by **AUGUST DERLETH**

–in the September issue of THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE

deadly joker

by Robert Bloch

There's only one trouble being a practical joker – after a while, it gets so that people don't really believe what you say.

Teddy had a hell of a time convincing Mac that he meant what he said about quitting. He told him about it during the supper break, while the relief bartender took over, and at first Mac just couldn't get it through his head.

"I really mean it," Teddy said. "This is my last night. Tomorrow I'm pulling out for Canada. See, here's the plane ticket. Picked it up this afternoon."

When Teddy showed him the ticket for Toronto, Mac finally realized he wasn't kidding. But he still didn't understand.

"I don't get it," he told Teddy. "I thought you liked it here."

"You know how it is," Teddy said. "A guy gets itchy."

"Is it the dough?" Mac fiddled around with his coffee-cup. "You been good for business, I was gonna give you a raise anyhow, first of September. I could maybe go another fifteen a week. That's good wages for a night bartender."

Robert Bloch, author of the best-selling PSYCHO (Simon & Schuster) and other novels, has become widely known in recent years for his novels and stories about minds in the shadows – tormented minds. Now working in Hollywood, he is said to feel that his chief claim to distinction, however, lies in the fact that he is the only living professional writer who has never been a dishwasher, a door-to-door salesman, or in the merchant marine. Or a bartender like Teddy. . . .

Teddy shook his head. "It isn't money," he said. "I'm just fed up with working.Besides, it's so damned hot in here. Honest, Mac, I don't see how you ever stood it, summer nights like this."

Mac grunted at him. "Guy's got to stand a lot of things if he wants to build a business. But the way the Fun House is going now, next year we can go for air-conditioning. Whaddya say, Teddy? Stick it out for a while--another couple of weeks and there won't be any more heat-waves. You got yourself a good following here. What's the sense of kicking it and starting out all over again?"

"You don't get me, Mac." Teddy chose his words carefully. "I'm not going to start over again. I'm quitting the bartending racket for good, as of tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" Mac spilled some of his coffee into the saucer. "You can't do that to me. Tomorrow's Saturday—I'll have one hell of a time getting a man for tomorrow night. You know I can't put a dog on for Saturday, it's our biggest rush."

"Tough." Teddy fingered his ticket. "But I already made my reservation." He leaned forward. "I know this puts you on the spot, Mac. By rights you're supposed to have at least two weeks' notice. But did you ever happen to figure that maybe I'm on the spot too?"

Mac blinked at him. "You mean you got to leave town, is that it?"

Teddy shrugged. "I never robbed any banks," he said. "You know me better than that. A whole year I been here and never got my hand caught in the register."

He paused, letting it sink in. Mac began to nod. "It's a dame, isn't it?" he murmured. "That Ella, maybe. You got her in trouble, huh?"

Teddy made a production out of looking at the floor. "I'm not saying anything, Mac. Not a word. All I can tell you is I'm sorry about the rush act, but I want out. I want out bad."

Mas stood up then and put his big hand on Teddy's shoulder. "All right," he said. "I guess we can manage okay. But stop around in the morning, will you? We'll check the take like we always do, and I'll settle for this week."

"Sure," Teddy said. "Ten o'clock, same as always."

Then Mac went away, and that was that. Promptly at eight the relief man left, and for a few minutes Teddy had the joint all to himself.

It was nice to be alone in the Fun House. This was the time Teddy always liked best — the little break between the late afternoon customers and the eve-

ning regulars. There was nobody around to make trouble for you, nobody hollering for a shot or spilling their beer or trying to get you to listen to some dirty joke you already heard maybe a hundred times and couldn't even laugh at the first time. There was no one shoving nickels into the juke-box, or yelling for you to turn on the television.

Come to think of it, tonight he'd get a break—the lousy ball games weren't on, according to the schedule. And he could turn down the volume on the juke. Chances were, there wouldn't be too much business anyway. Maybe he could take it easy and relax.

Teddy turned and faced the mirror. The minutes he saw himself he knew that he wasn't going to take it easy. He couldn't relax. Not when he looked in the mirror and remembered who he was. Teddy Baer. A fat-faced little guy with ginger-coloured fuzz all over the top of his skull. He looked like Teddy Baer, all right. No wonder they always called him by that nickname, ever since he was a kid, instead of Donald. Not that Donald was such a hot name, either, but it was better than Teddy.

Teddy Baer.

Funny, he hadn't minded it for a long time; got used to it, he guessed, because wherever he went some wise guy would think of his last name and then take a good look at him and come up with the Teddy Baer crack. Very clever.

But Teddy went along with the gag, and maybe that's what helped him get started as a practical joker. What's a little guy to do, especially if he's too fat to be handy with his dukes? He might as well grin and bear it. And the jokes helped too—if you had to take it, once in a while you got a chance to dish it out.

No, he hadn't really minded his nickname until Ella came along. He remembered how she used to come in at first, all alone, and sit way down at the end of the bar. At first he spotted her for a neighborhood tramp, but he learned different. She never tried to give anyone the business, and when a couple of the regulars tried to move in they got a very fast brush. Ella just liked to sit down at the end of the bar and drink maybe two-three beers on a hot night. Along about the second week she started bringing in a book with her and sitting in a booth.

That's when Teddy found out she was a student, up at Columbia. She'd come from some hick town in Indiana, and she was going to be a biologist. He might have figured it was something like that; she didn't look like a pushover. Not Ella, with that clean, scrubbed look that comes from not wearing any makeup. She always smelled kind of

fresh, and her voice was so soft, and she had a way of looking up at you when she talked like a little kid trying to please a grown-up.

What the hell was the use of kidding about it; Teddy was nuts about her. He'd known a couple of dames in his time, what bartender hasn't, but they were just the usual line of pigs. That's all a bartender usually gets to meet, seeing what his hours are and where he does business. But this Ella was a different proposition.

At least, he always thought so, until after he took her out a few times on his off-nights, and got around to telling her he was serious.

Mac had an idea that Teddy given her the business, and that's just what Teddy wanted him to think.

How could he tell him the truth? How could he tell him that Ella had tried to let him down gently; told him that it would never work, because she had a career to think of and he was—let's face it—just a bartender? And then, when Teddy kept after her, when he was practically down on his knees begging her, she'd laughed. Laughed at him, because he was a funny old Teddy Baer, and it was all a joke; he was a practical joker, couldn't he take a joke on himself?

Teddy took it, all right.

He even took it when Ella started to come in after that with her friends from the school. He noticed she never showed up alone any more, and that bothered him plenty, but he made up his mind to take it. Ella was always very friendly and polite, and she never made fun of him, so he took it just for the pleasure of seeing her once or twice a week.

But lately, she'd stopped coming around for almost a month—and then, last Saturday, she came in with this guy. This young punk, this tall snotnose with the crew cut and the wise-guy glasses. The minute Teddy saw him, he knew. And he watched the two of them sitting together in the booth, all evening. It was Saturday, and on Saturday nights Teddy never served the booths. But he could see them, laughing together, and drinking Martinis. Beer wasn't good enough for her any more. No, she had to drink Martinis, one of those snotty college-type drinks.

The two of them had been so busy playing footsie in the booth that when they went ou the guy had even forgotten his satchel. Briefcase is what it really was, and Teddy noticed it right after they left.

He could have run out the front door and maybe hailed the guy before he got away, but he didn't. Let the punk come back.

Donald Thomas, his name was, stamped in gold letters right on the briefcase. That was a coincidence for you. This guy's name was Donald, too. But nobody was calling him Teddy. Nobody was making corny remarks about him or handing him a hard time. He was tall and young and going to college and he had a future ahead of him. A future, and Ella.

So let him come back and look for his lousy briefcase.

Teddy had put it away under the bar, not even bothering to try and open it. Full of school work, probably. Well, it couldn't be too important, or he'd have remembered and come back for it on Monday.

Chances were, he intended to pick it up again on Saturday night. Teddy had a hunch he'd come in then. Him and Ella.

But he wouldn't be around to see them.

Just when he made up his mind to clear out, Teddy couldn't remember. Maybe it had been last Saturday night, when Ella left with the guy.

That was the time the headache had started, anyway. He'd had a headache ever since. At first he thought it was something he ate, maybe he'd better cut down on the fried food for a few days. Then he figured it must be the heat. This last heatwave was murder, and it kept hanging on and hanging on. And no air-conditioning. Of course the fans helped a little, but when you got a lot of traffic and had to rush around behind the bar, you wilted fast. And how many times had be been forced to listen to that crack, "It's not the heat, it's the stupidity?"

It was the stupidity, all right, but he wasn't going to take take much more of it. Or the heat, either.

He couldn't take much more of it. Running back and forth behind the bar, sweating his eyeballs off, and all the while this pounding in the back of his head. It was like something had tightened up inside him, all his neck-muscles, when he saw Ella and that guy together for the first time. And he'd been seeing them ever since—when he went to his room at night and laid down on the hot bed, closing his eyes. That's when he could see them best. Ella and Donald. Ella and Donald sitting together. Ella and Donald laughing. Ella and Donald kissing. Ella and Donald ——

No, he couldn't tell Mac the truth about that. Let him think he'd gotten her into trouble. Just too damned bad it *wasn't* that way. He wished it was, now. If he had a chance to do it all over again, she'd never be able to laugh at him. Because the first time he got her alone, he'd have his hand over her mouth, and

he'd shove her down, the lousy pig, and ——

Teddy turned away from the mirror. He didn't like to look at himself when his face changed that way. It was like seeing a stranger. A stranger with a splitting headache, a stranger with a head ready to bust because there was too much inside it. Something had to give, something had to spill out.

Maybe he was ready to flip. Lots of guys flipped in hot weather like this; guys who didn't have this kind of trouble to think about, either.

Well, he wouldn't have the trouble much longer. He was getting out while the getting was good. Getting out fast, before tomorrow night, before there was a chance of seeing Ella again. He knew he couldn't take any more.

That's why he insisted on quiting after tonight. And Mac had let him. Tomorrow evening he'd be up where it was nice and cool. So now, why not forget about it?

Teddy glanced at the clock. A little after eight, time to clear the decks for action. The bar was clean. He'd already done a bottle-check, and there was plenty of ice. Let's see; the relief bartender had washed up the glasses, and checked the pressure on the taps. Teddy opened the refrigerator. Must be almost five cases on ice—that ought to hold them for tonight, even if it was hot. Unless some damned queer came in and asked for ale. Those lousy queers and their ale! There wasn't anything Teddy hated worse, unless it was the smart young punks who never told you they wanted a beer but always said, "Give me a brew." There was a smart sophisticated remark for you! "Give me a brew." Teddy could spot that kind a mile off. There were the ones who never told you the exact size of anything, either; they made a gesture with their hands and said it was, "Yea big."

Teddy would like to give them all something "Yea big"; jam it right down their throats. Yes, them and the guys who came in to cry over the way the horse ran out, and the guys who came in to cry over the way the wife ran out, and the guys who came in to cry over the way the dough ran out. He hated them all. And he hated the laughing-boys and the women who wanted their Martinis "Very, *very* dry, please," and the old moochers who tried to peddle papers but got mad if anybody actually took one, and wanted you to hand them out a free shot, too. He hated the tramps, and he hated the lonely guys who tried to pick them up, and he hated the married couples who said this was their fifteenth wedding anniversary and expected you to pop, and he

hated the soldiers and the sailors and the goddam Marine Corps and ——

Jesus, who didn't he hate?

It was the heat, it was the headache. He'd better grab a quickie and ease up.

Teddy poured out a drink. Come to think of it, he'd been drinking a lot this last week; usually he never even touched the stuff, and when somebody was buying he settled for a cigar. But the sauce had kept him going, particularly when he couldn't sleep. And seeing as how this was the last night, he might as well help himself to something off the top shelf. Mac wouldn't care; he owed him a few shots. Besides, the hell with Mac.

But he had to stop that kind of stuff. As the drink went down—hot, but then the whole place was like an oven anyway — Teddy tried to argue himself out of it.

He was Teddy Baer, and he was on duty tonight for the last time. Teddy Baer, just a ton of fun, always good for a laugh, the best back-bar joker in the business. He could tell a story, he could pull a rib, he could give a hotfoot with a straight face. All during this last week, Teddy had been doing more and more of just that.

It sort of helped him to take his mind off things, cutting up a little. Usually he averaged maybe one hotfoot a week, and then only when somebody asked him to as a special gag, and he was sure it wouldn't cause any trouble. But this past week he'd given seven. And on his own, too. A couple of the guys got pretty sore, but Teddy managed to cool them down. He didn't mind cooling them down, or even buying a couple on the house, because seeing them jump made it worth it.

After he knew he was really going to quit, he even took to watching out for some of the customers who liked to give him a hard time. He told them off, but good; always making with the big smile, of course, and being careful not to go too far out of line. But there were a couple of old biddies he scored on, and one guy got in dutch with his wife because Teddy made some crack about "Who's the new girl-friend?" The guy was a salesman, and he'd been in before with some stenographer from his office. Teddy liked the look that came over the guy's face when he saw that his wife had caught on. The two of them had gone out quarreling.

Best of all had been last night, when Teddy pulled the old dribble-glass routine on those smart-alecks up in the front booth. Bacardis they wanted yet, and then when he brought them they had to make some remarks about how he used dark rum in-

stead of light. Teddy noticed they were all dressed up for an evening on the town, so the next round came to them in the dribble-glasses. He made a point of whispering to everybody at the bar, so they'd understand it was all a gag, and they sure laughed loud enough. He knew if they all laughed together, the people in the booth wouldn't have guts enough to get really sore; people are like that, they want to pretend they're good sports. But those damned Bacardis sure spoiled the party-dresses the two dames were wearing, and he bet the cleaners wouldn't be able to get the stains out, either.

Teddy laughed so hard himself for a minute he'd almost forgotten how he really felt; but only for a minute. The laughing made his head hurt worse. It was like he blacked out for a second, and when he came to and looked again he could see the Bacardis slopped all over the tablecloth in the booth, oozing red like blood.

Teddy shook his head now. He was going to cut out that kind of stuff, remember? He turned around and checked the signs behind the cash-register. There were a lot of those comical sayings stuck up along the mirror—wooden plaques, mostly. He started to read them.

In God We Trust — All Others Pay Cash.

Don't Go Away Mad — Just Go Away!

There were others, too; Teddy had bought a whole snag of them, with his own dough, just to help out on the "atmosphere" of the Fun House. Sort of build up the gag idea. He wondered if he ought to take them along with him. Oh, what the hell, let Mac keep them. They'd be like a souvenir. Mac was really going to miss him; a lot of the regular gang would miss him. They'd be sorry to hear he was going away. All but Ella. Damn Ella! Damn her to ——

Teddy stiffened. Customers were coming in the door, two of them. The night was starting.

He put on his Teddy Baer smile for them. And he put on his Teddy Baer voice, and he brought them their beers and he gave them their change, ringing up the lousy thirty cents just as if they'd ordered champagne. Even when they slopped suds all over the bar, he just wiped it clean without a word.

He was a bartender, by God, and this was his last night. He'd show them what a professional could do.

By this time another guy had come in, a rye-on-the-rocks, and a middle-aged couple, one vodka Martini and one gin-and-tonic. Then there were two Buds and a Rheingold, and a young whiskey-and-water who left right after he got it down. Guy look-

ed frightened, like he was in some kind of trouble; maybe he had a headache too. But Teddy was too busy to notice, for a while. A couple came in and sat in the second booth. Teddy didn't like the booth trade when he was on alone like this, and the damned jerks were always playing the juke-box, too.

Sure enough, they got their lousy beers and then the creep went over to the juke and plunged a quarter. The last of the big-time spenders.

Teddy might have known what he'd pick. That goddam rock-and-roll, or whatever they called it. Some guy who sounded like he was sick at his stomach and heaving all over his guitar. Made you sick too, listening to it. Teddy was glad he had the volume turned down as far as it would go.

But now what? The creep was putting in a beef about the volume. Couldn't the juke be turned up a little?

"Yes sir."

Teddy went back behind the bar and turned the box on full-blast. The noise almost blew the top of his head off, but he didn't care. Let 'em live a little. The next beer was going right over the buy's pants. He wouldn't be getting up to drop another quarter so soon, not with a wet fly.

Teddy grinned when he thought about it, and the face across from him grinned back over the bar. It was a regular, name of Jensen, and he had two other guys with him.

"Set 'em up," Jensen said. "Straight shots all around."

"Celebrating?"

"That's right. You're looking at the proud father of a baby boy. Born just three hours ago. Weighs seven pounds, nine ounces."

"Good for you!" Teddy said.

Yeah, good for him. Teddy knew all about Jensen—he was a flunkey in a department store, a shoe-dog. Probably made all of fifty bucks a week; he never bought anything but beer. And here he was, playing bigshot and buying shots for a couple of moochers. Why in hell was he so happy, just because he'd brought a brat into the world? Lousy kid'd eat him out of house and home, he'd spend a fortune raising him up, and chances were he'd turn out to be another hard-luck working stiff, just like Jensen. Sure, that called for a celebration, all right. Big deal.

"Say, you ought to be buying cigars," said one of the other guys.

"That's right." Jenson was all set to reach into his pocket and pop for smokes, but Teddy shook his head.

"No—allow me," he said. He turned and took the box off the shelf behind him. The trio selected their cigars.

"Gee, thanks a lot,' said Jensen.

"Man doesn't have a kid every day," Teddy said. "Not unless he's shacked up with a harem."

Jensen chuckled and started to make some crack about harems and how he could use a little of that right now, but Teddy spotted another customer. The middle-aged couple had left; probably the juke box got on their nerves just like it was murdering Teddy. But another pair of regulars had taken their place. Teddy recognized Meyer, from the tailor-shop down the street, and one of his pals.

He went over and smiled. "What'll it be, gents?"

Meyer shrugged. "So, the usuatl." He always said the same thing and he always shrugged. A sad sack, this Meyer character, and something about him got on Teddy's nerves. With that sick puss of his and everybody in the neighborhood knowing that his old lady was down with cancer, Teddy never could give him the needles. Instead, he always pretended to cheer him up with jokes.

Well, he had a special joke for him tonight. The way his head felt now, the way he was sweating under the arms and his feet burning, Teddy didn't feel very much like telling jokes. But for sad little Meyer he had to.

Setting down two beers, Teddy leaned over the bar. "Hey, I heard a good one," he said. "Cohen dies and his wife goes to the undertaking parlor, see? She asks the funeral director for a real classy job—you know how it is with the Hebes, they're great on family stuff." Teddy paused, just long enough to let it sink in. This was a beauty, because he knew Meyer didn't like cracks about the Jews, and he knew he didn't like to think about funerals. But Meyer would have to go along with the gag, and he did. Teddy smiled at him and made him smile back.

"So anyway," Teddy said, "the funeral director does his stuff and when the body is all laid out he brings Mrs. Cohen in to take a look at it. And he says, 'how do you like it?' So Mrs. Cohen looks at Abie and she says, 'Vell — you did a movelous job. A movelous job'."

Teddy bore down heavy on the accent. He was sure Meyer didn't like dialect stories.

" 'But one thing,' Mrs. Cohen says. 'Just one thing. Mine Abie, he was a very conserwative man. A real pillar from sassiety. How come you got him dressed in soch a jazzy bow-tie, wit' a striped shoit, yet, and soch a fency-schency checkered suit? Couldnt he maybe wear some 'ting a little plainer?'

"So the funeral director calls his assistant over and he says, 'Sam, I got a job for you.' He explains what the trouble is and

Sam says, 'Okay, boss, I'll fix it up in a jiffy. Don't go away.' And he wheels the body out, see? In about two minutes back he comes, pushing Cohen in the coffin, and he says to Mrs. Cohen, 'How's this?'

"Mrs. Cohen looks down and there is Abie, wearing a white shirt, a plain tie, and a blue suit. She says, 'Wonderful, just vot I vanted. And away she goes.

"Funeral director looks at his assistant and he says, 'Great work! I'm proud of you. But tell me something—how did you manage to change all the guy's clothes in just two minutes?'

"The assistant looks at him and says, 'Who said anything about changing clothes? I just changed heads'."

Teddy was all set to cap it with a big horse-laugh, but there was another noise. It came from Jensen and his friends. All three of the damned cigars had exploded at once.

He almost busted a gut looking at their faces, particularly Jensen, who's gotten his glasses knocked crooked. But the sound hurt his head, and he could feel his ears ringing, and for a minute he almost blacked out again—the way he had the other night.

Jensen was starting to say something, sounded like a squawk, only Teddy didn't pay any attention.

All at once he was staring at the door. He could see Ella coming in. Ella and this Donald Thomas, walking arm in arm and laughing, heading for the rear booth.

Just then the couple in the second booth got up, and the creep was putting another quarter in the juke box—wet fly or no wet fly. The first record started, and it blasted his eardrums. He couldn't have heard Jensen complaining even if he wanted to.

Jensen and his friends probably realized that, because they turned away and started out the door. Damned soreheads, could not take a joke.

Teddy walked over to the rear booth. Now he was glad the juke was on so loud, because it was an excuse not to try and talk—all he did was say, "Your order, please?"

Ella tried to tell him, "Hello" or some thing like that, but Teddy made believe he couldn't hear her. He just bent over the guy and listened while he asked for a couple of Martinis. Very dry. Teddy nodded and turned away quickly.

On the way back, Teddy picked up another beer order from the young couple in the second booth. He decided to serve them first, and this time he managed to pull the spilled beer routine. It looked like an accident, but the guy must have been wise, because he started to

get up. Teddy didn't even bother to try and listen to him. He was watching Ella and Donald Thomas over the top of the booth, and he could see the ape grabbing her hand.

For a minute he wanted to smash the guy who was complaining about the spilled beer, so he just turned away again. He felt like turning away from everybody, now. He just wanted to crawl in a corner and die. They were pushing him in a corner, all of them, pushing him with their squawks and their noise and their celebrations. They wanted to push him, push him out of the way, he didn't matter a damn to anyone. He was just a flunkey, a servant, somebody to jump when they called him. Make with the drinks, make with the funny stuff, and then leave us alone. We have our own wives, our own lives, our own babies, our own music, our own pleasures, our love ——

Teddy made the Martinis. He swung the shaker, gripping it so hard his hand almost broke the glass. If he broke it, he'd cut himself, and then there'd be blood ——

The juke pounded, his head pounded, his feet pounded as he served the drinks. It was hard to hear, and even hard to see. Everything was a blur, a hot blur that throbbed. And Donald Thomas gave him a dollar and said something about, "Keep the change, Mac."

His name wasn't Mac, it was Teddy. Mac was the boss, and he was just Teddy Baer. Teddy Baer, the practical joker. Only nobody appreciated his practical jokes. Look, Meyer and his friend were walking out.

The young people in the second booth were still listening to the records. The kid was trying to dry his pants. Maybe they'd go away, then. He wanted them to go away, everybody. Go away and leave him alone.

Jesus! Now a hillbilly record came on.

"Come sit by mysi-ude, litt-ul dah-r-lingg ——"

And they *were* sitting side by side, Ella and Donald Thomas; he'd switched places, come over to her side of the booth so he could get closer to her.

Teddy turned his back. A sign behind the bar caught his eye. *Qwicherbellyachin!*

And there was the mirror, he could still see them in the bar-mirror. That fancy-pants student, with his name in gold on his lousy briefcase!

Suddenly Teddy remembered about the briefcase. He reached under the bar and pulled it out on the serving platform. Might as well hand it back. He fingered the lock. All at once it came open.

Teddy noticed a sheaf of papers and several notebooks.

Something about *Lab.* and something about *Pre-Med.* That was it, the fink was a medical student. Might have known Ella would go for one of them.

Thinking about medical students gave Teddy an ilea. The place was almost empty now, except for the couple in the second booth, and they'd be on their way soon. They would leave just Ella and Donald Thomas. Donald Thomas, that big wheel in Medical School.

Suppose, on their next drink, Teddy played a little practical joke? Just one last little joke, for old time's sake?

Maybe that would sort of square things up a bit. A kind of a farewell present on the house—a fast Mickey.

Teddy had a bottle of the stuff in a drawer. He wasn't supposed to, and he'd never used it, but he knew it was there. He'd picked it up, wondering if someday it might come in handy. Well, when would he find a better chance? Let's see if the bigshot medical student would know what hit him. He could use a small amount, make sure it wouldn't work for an hour or so—then ease them out of the joint and close up early. By the time the Mickey got in its licks, they'd be gone and he'd be gone. And when they figured out what happened, tomorrow, he'd be far, far away.

Ella would finally get the connection, though. She'd realize he hadn't left without slipping her a little farewell present.

The more he thought about it, the more excited he got. Teddy felt it coming over him in waves, like the heat did, and like the throbbing in his head. It was the same feeling he got when he watched a guy get the hotfoot. He'd stare at the flame, looking at it lick away at the leather, and sometimes the idea popped into his head that the flames wouldn't stop. Suddenly they'd catch hold, go leaping up the trouser-leg, burst out all over the guy's body, burn him to ashes, burn him while he screamed ——

But that was goofy, he mustn't think of such things. Just wait until that other couple left, and then make with the Mickey. And keep the amount small, remember not to go overboard. No sense killing anybody.

Now the couple from the second booth was leaving; the guy was hot all right, and he kept giving Teddy dirty looks. He mumbled something as he passed the bar, but Teddy couldn't hear him above the racket. The damned fool was going out while he still had two records coming. Well, let him.

And Ella was waving at him from the booth.

Teddy walked over there. It was easier to walk, now that he knew what he was going to

do. Easier to smile, too. He bent down and said, "What's your pleasure? Another round?" The guy nodded, but Ella grabbed his arm.

"Teddy," she said. "I want you to meet Donald Thomas, he's a friend of mine."

The guy stuck out his paw—he had one of those lousy signet rings from some fraternity—and he stort of grinned, and he said, "Why don't you tell him, Ella, you ain't ashamed, are you? I'm her *fiance*."

Teddy stood up straight, and he heard his voice coming from far away. He'd intended to say something about the guy's briefcase, but instead what came out was, "Congratulations. The next round's on me."

It was hard for him to hear himself talk, with that blast from the box. And walking back was very hard indeed. The only thing that kept him going was remembering what he intended to do with the drinks.

He started to mix, keeping his head down so he wouldn't have to look at them across the bar. The sweat ran down into his eyes, and he put his hand around the shaker. It felt like a throat. A cool throat, something to squeeze and squeeze ——

But now the drinks were ready to serve. All he had to do was add the Mickey.

Teddy hesitated, because he knew that he'd changed his mind. He couldn't give them the small dose now. They were going to get a big one. They were going to get it all. Maybe enough to kill them.

Sure, it was risky. Sooner or later, somebody would figure out what happened, where they got it. Then they'd come looking for him. Well, let them come. He was going through with it because this was his only chance.

Teddy wiped the sweat out of his eyes and his hand groped down to open the drawer under the bar. Somehow he bumped the briefcase, and another notebook fell out. A notebook and a shiny thing that rolled.

It must be a test-tube—no, what did they call the small bottles? — a vial. Teddy picked it up. There was a little label stuck on the side, with something written across it in ink. What did it say? *Cult. tetanus bacilli.* Whatever that was.

Wait a minute. Tetanus. Wasn't that the stuff that gave you lockjaw?

Sure, he'd read about it someplace. Tetanus germs. Jesus, that stuff could kill you. Just a drop of it.

All at once Teddy wasn't hot any more. He was cold. And his headache was gone, because he could think very clearly.

Tetanus. Better than a Mickey because it couldn't be traced. You pick up the germs in bad food, catch it off a glass or some-

thing. And it probably took a couple of days to work, too. Even if the law did start nosing around, they'd never figure things out. What the hell, you didn't buy tetanus in a drugstore. All he had to do was slip it to them, and then get rid of the vial and the briefcase.

Fate, that's what it was. Fate, handing him the last laugh after all. He was going to serve a farewell drink, a real farewell drink. What a gag!

Teddy began to giggle as he opened the vial, and he had to tell himself to be careful. Mustn't spill anything now. Oh, this was rich, this was a real hot one. The best practical joke of all. But he must play it straight. Pour it in, two drops for each drink. And recork the vial, there. Now put the glasses on the tray. Carry it over to them, carry it over and try not to laugh right in their silly, staring faces.

"Here you are."

Teddy set the glasses down, watched them reach for their drinks.

"A toast to your future."

He watched Ella pick up her glass, place it against her lips.

And then the damned punk stood up. "Hey, wait a minute," he shouted. "Don't drink that!"

"Donald, what on earth ——?"

"He put some thing in it, I was watching him in the mirror."

Teddy moved, then. He bent forward, scooping up Ella's drink, and pressed it to her mouth.

But the punk knocked the glass out of his hand and shoved him back into the aisle, back against the bar. Ella rose, screaming, and ran out of the booth, out of the tavern.

Teddy tried to make a break for it too, but the guy grabbed his arm and twisted it behind him so he couldn't get loose. Then he marched Teddy behind the bar. Of course he saw the briefcase there, and the tetanus vial.

"This what you put in our drinks?" he asked.

Teddy nodded, and the guy smiled. "At first I was afraid you were trying to slip us a Mickey Finn."

"What the hell's so funny?" Teddy shouted. "I was going to slip you a Mickey. The whole damned bottle, enough to kill you. But then I found this stuff. What difference does it make— I damned near got away with it, didn't I? So you can wipe that silly grin off your face. I'll still kill you if I get another chance, I'll kill you and her too, Ill kill them all ——"

He'd been shouting so loud he hadn't even noticed Ella come back in with the cop, but the cop was there, all right. And now he took Teddy's arm, and he was asking the guy what happened, and the guy was telling him.

" – forgot I left my briefcase, and of course that's where he found it. Fortunately, there's nothing in the vial but water."

"Water?" Ella said.

"That's right, honey. I'd fixed it up for tomorrow night – you know, the fraternity initiation. It was supposed to be a practical joke."

A practical joke. All at once it struck Teddy, and he began to laugh. "You heard what the man said," he told the cop. "It was a practical joke, that's all. I thought I was fooling them, and all the time the joke was on me! The funniest damned thing – of course I knew it was water all along, but they didn't know I knew and I didn't know they knew, and ––"

Teddy could see the officer understood. It was just a gag he'd cooked up; everybody knew what a joker he was, always clowning and never meaning any real harm.

The officer said something about hearing Teddy admit he meant to kill Ella and her boyfriend, but of course that was ridiculous. Teddy started to explain, but the officer told him he'd have to come along with him and tell it downtown.

It took Teddy quite a while before he understood, because he was laughing so hard he couldn't hear anything else. He'd just noticed one of those funny signs behind the bar. The one that said, *You Don't Have To Be Crazy To Work Here – But It Helps.*

THERE WERE TWENTY PEOPLE WATCHING

A headline in the New York HERALD TRIBUNE, the other day, told how there had been twenty people watching as three teenagers, two of them seventeen years old and one fifteen years old, mugged a 76 years old great-grandmother as she walked through an underpass beneath the Grand Concourse in the Bronx.

It was still bright outside. It wasn't dark there in the underpass. At least twenty people in and near the tunnel saw the boys approach her, saw them clutch at the "feather-light, 4-feet-10-inches tall woman", saw them kick and strike her after she had fallen to the sidewalk, and saw them tear the pocketbook away from her which contained Eight Dollars.

And no one interfered until, so the story went, a man neared the others. And then the boys had run. . .

What is disturbing is that this is not an isolated happening.

I have myself seen obviously law-abiding and no doubt church-going men and women pass, their eyes averted, a similar incident – mute and silent, intent only on going about their own business. What is happening is simply of no concern to them as it happens – so long as it happens to someone else.

This has come to be part of our way of life in recent years. It is urgent that we face this reality – and do something about it, as citizens – while there is still time! ***H.S.S.***

star spangled night

by Fredric Brown

THE STORY runs in our family that my great grandfather owned a rowboat. From what I've heard of him, I guess he never owned anything else much. He lived in a suburb of Baltimore, and he used the rowboat to do a bit of fishing in Chesapeake Bay.

But the story that goes with the rowboat isn't a fish story at all. It's a story about a lawyer.

It was 1814, and there was a war fleet of British ships right smack in Chesapeake Bay. Things didn't look so good for a struggling young nation called America. The blockade was a tough one, and it was strangling the States. England had gained practice on blockades since then, but she wasn't an amateur even in 1814.

Great-grandfather had been just a kid during the Revolutionary squabble, and when the 1812 trouble c a m e a l o n g they wouldn't take him in the navy. It seems he'd annexed a cork leg just a few years before, and the country seemed to think the best thing he could do was to con-

---

When Fredric Brown wrote this vignette, more than twenty years ago, he had not attained his present importance as the portraitist, in many of his novels, of the mores of our South West. Even then prominent in the field, he was active as a proofreader, conducting a children's department for a religious magazine, and running a proof reader's department for a leading trade magazine in the printing field. AND . . . *H.S.S.*

Originally published in the July 1941 issue of **Coronet.**
Copyright 1941 by Esquire, Inc.
Reprinted by permission of the author and the auther's agent Mr Harry Altshuler.

tinue supplying fish to the good burghers of Baltimore.

But what with the cork leg, and the fish running pretty well, Great-grandfather never tangled with the British until the September afternoon when the Washington lawyer wanted someone to row him out to the British fleet.

The fleet lay out there in the bay, big as life, with no one able to do a thing about it as long as it stayed out of range of the shore batteries. It had sunk a few small craft that hadn't been able to get out of the way soon enough, but there hadn't been a battle. Not any worth mentioning.

Well, when the Washington lawyer in his fancy clothes asked Great-grandfather to row him out, Great-grandfather hadn't been enthusiastic about the idea.

He looked out at the fleet and spat into the water that floated it. He made a comment or two not overly complimentary to British ships and to fancy-pants Washington lawyers who wanted to go visiting them.

But all lawyers are smooth talkers. This one explained his motive for wishing to visit the fleet. A friend of his was a captive on one of the ships, and the lawyer was acquainted with the captain of the flagship and thought he could talk him into releasing his friend. And they'd go out under a white flag and be perfectly safe. And he'd pay ten silver dollars, and it wouldn't take more than a couple of hours, and was Great-grandfather afraid?

So there he was, rowing out toward the British flagship and the flagship's guns swinging to cover his progress in spite of the white flag that the lawyer was holding up in sight.

The guns didn't fire, and he rowed right up to the flagship. They threw down a ladder, and the lawyer went aboard. Great-grandfather reckoned he'd stick by the rowboat, and he sat there trying to ignore the remarks the British sailors tossed down over the rail until a crimson-coated looie came along and ordered them to quit baiting the Yankee.

It was late afternoon by then, and the sun was going lower and lower. Great-grandfather began to fidget and worry, and started wondering whether to go up the ladder and see what was what or whether he should row back home and let the damned lawyer swim.

Just as he made up his mind to flip a shilling to see which he should do, the lawyer came to the rail and called down that Great-grandfather would have to come aboard. The fellow's face was white. Great-grandfather yelled up why should he, and a few sailors with muskets stepped

up to the rail and told him why he should.

"I'm sorry," he was told by the lawyer, "but we'll have to stay here until the action is over. They're going to attack."

Some of the sailors were grinning. Great-grandfather stopped thinking about Baltimore long enough to tell them what he thought of them, and they took him down to the brig. He saw them start for another companionway with the lawyer. But they took him somewhere else, and Great-grandfather found himself all alone, except for rats, in the brig of the flagship.

He felt the ship begin to move and then after a while he heard the guns begin to fire in mighty salvos that shook the whole hull.

Then Great-grandfather remembered that they hadn't taken his clasp-knife away from him, and he started to work on the door of the brig. He didn't have any definite idea what good it would do him or anyone else if he carved a hole in it, but it gave him something to do.

The noise got worse. At times the ship shook as it took a ball from the American cannon. Through the bars on the upper part of the door, he could see them carrying dead and wounded sailors and gunners down into the ship every once in a while.

Nobody paid any attention to Great-grandfather, though, and he kept on carving. But the point of the knife broke off in the hard wood, and he never did get through the door.

It was broad daylight when them came and got him, and the battle seemed to be over. At least, they weren't fighting any more, and the minute he got on deck he could see that they had backed off out of range of the shore.

The deck of the flagship was nothing to boast of at the moment. The sailors weren't grinning, either, when they took him to the side of the ship. His rowboat, by some miracle, still floated beside the scarred hull. He went down the ladder and the lawyer followed him down, and Great-grandfather rowed for the shore.

"What happened?" he asked the lawyer, as soon as they got out of earshot of the British.

According to one version of great-grandfather's story, the lawyer described the whole battle between the ships and the fort. Another version, and I like it best, was that the lawyer had merely pointed to the fort and the flag that flew over it and said, "Look!"

When they got to shore, the lawyer gave Great-grandfather his ten dollars, said he was sorry he'd caused him to undergo imprisonment overnight and offered his hand.

Great-grandfather had never

shaken hands with a fancy-pants lawyer before, but he could see from the way this guy had reacted to the fight that he was a patriot, and that it wasn't his fault maybe if he happened to have friends in the British navy. So he shook hands with the lawyer.

That's all there is to the story. Great-grandfather lived to a hale old age, and it wasn't until the last that he made a peculiar request of his family. He wanted them to have his right hand, which had shaken the lawyer's hand on that morning after the right, stuffed and put in a museum after his death.

We didn't do it, of course, but we knew how he felt, and I can't say I blame him much. Yes, the lawyer's name was Francis Scott Key, and the fort was Fort McHenry. And the star-spangled banner still waves proudly above it.

AN EDITORIAL ASIDE

Some weeks ago I found myself attempting to explain, at a cocktail party following the Mystery Writers of American Annual Awards Dinner, just why I had rejected this story which the writer, whose work I respect, obviously liked . . . It had had to do with the sort of situation so familiar to those who "know" the revolution-troubled countries circling the Caribbean — those countries which, even in these days, so many Americans "know" the way tourists know countries — without ever knowing the peoples. . .

The story had been good. This man seems incapable of writing badly. But the protagonists — the actors in this macabre sequel to a revolution — were so difficult to believe in that one hesitated. There were no shades — there were no grays — there were only the victorious damned, deciding the fate of those who had lost, and it seemed as unreal as was that other revolutionary in a novel I commented on some months back. These were, no doubt unconsciously, close to being stereotypes. And I am afraid I do not respond to such.

I though of this conversation when I read, the other day, how a close friend (a distributor of this magazine, incidentally) had been shot in Haiti. The President, who may no longer be President by the time you read this, had had Max Bouchereau and his brothers shot — three of the many to die in the terror which was gripping Haiti.

Max Bouchereau, a gentle man, a good man, who had served his country with distinction in other days and subsequently established this book store in Port au Prince, was murdered because he and his kind stand for a way of life which can yet save Haiti. And the Caribbean. There are times when we forget that these men and women who stand prepared to give their lives in order that democracy should come to their countries, are neither the mock-heroes with whom the newspapers have made us so familiar, nor the caricatures of the same whom we meet in some stories. These are men and women like ourselves — possessed by a dream — capable of a courage which we sometimes forget is part of our heritage — men and women at whose passing we can only bow our heads in silent prayer, and in grief. . . . H.S.S.

jose gaspar and the princess

by Baynard Kendrick

During the reign of Ferdinand VI there was born to Senor and Senora Gaspar, well-to-do and highly respected citizens of Madrid, Spain a black-eyed bouncing baby boy, who was christened Jose. This blessed event took place in the year 1756.

Jose Gaspar grew apace into a bonny youth, making all the first teams in school, and in addition bringing home a steady stream of "A's" to delight his proud parents. He was particularly good in mathematics and languages, mastering French and English with facility as well as his native tongue.

As he grew older an artistic streak became apparent. He had an eye for the bobby-soxers, developed a nice taste in precious gems, and a deep love for the art work on the Spanish doubloon.

All in all, he was a manly little fellow, with few bad traits to indicate that he might possibly be The World's No. 1 Juvenile Delinquent, who would one day leave his infamous name attached on Florida's west coast to

---

Baynard Kendrick, one of the all-time greats in this field, is of course best known for his novels about Captain Duncan Maclain, the blind detective. Readers of this magazine will recall his CLOTH-OF-GOLD MURDERS (SMM, June 1962) and his earlier MURDER MADE IN MOSCOW (SDM, Aug. 1957). But here Mr. Kendrick turns to another period, and to the story of a young man with somewhat less than proper interests in the good things of life.

Originally published in **The Tampa** (Fla.) **Tribune,** Febr. 10, 1963.
Reprinted by permisson of the author and the author's agents, Paul R. Reynolds.

two islands (Big and Little), two passes (Big and Little), one fishing village, and a sound.

Nor was it on the cards that 200 years later celebrations in his memory, occurring each February, would jam-pack every Tampa motor-court and hotel.

Ferdinand VI died and was succeeded by Charles III when Jose was three years old. The Gaspars, who had an "in" at court, introduced their brilliant son, who soon won favor with his wit, intelligence, and modest mien.

When Jose was tapped for the Spanish navy at an early age, his career was fast and furious. Not only was he an excellent seaman, but he was top-grade in cutlass fighting, shot a mean cannon, had absorbed a proper hatred of England from hanging around court, and proved on half a dozen occasions that he wasn't afraid of the Devil himself.

It's hardly fair to say that his promotions were rapid because he was the fair-haired protege of the King.

In 1782, at the age of 26, we find Capt. Jose Gaspar in full command of a Spanish corvette, and so well thought of that during a fiesta the crown jewels of Spain were entrusted to his care.

Overcome at the sight of so many glittering baubles so available all in a bunch, our hero, whose nice taste in precious gems had increased with the years succumbed to temptation and purloined a choice few.

It was a sloppy job for a man with Jose's talents for it didn't take the local policia more than a couple of days to run the loot down. Jose was the first to realize that he'd made a boo-boo.

This was one time he couldn't run to the King for help. Caramba! This was lese-majesty! The Old man would throw the book at him for digging rubies and emeralds out of his private crown.

Hastily scribbling a good-bye message which read "Hasta la visat!" he nailed it to a piling and sailed off with a 14-gun corvette that belonged to the Spanish crown. He'd heard somewhere that Charlotte Harbor, in Florida, might be a nice place to retire and settle down.

Charlotte Harbor proved to be all the prospectus claimed for it, quiet and secluded, and still not too far off of the beaten track. It took our boy a couple of years to get really organized.

He changed his name to Gasparilla (Little Gaspar), built a fort on an island which he gave his own alias for a name, cutlassed an ear from a few rebellious crew-members and fed the barracuda with the really stubborn ones.

By 1784 he'd crowned himself

King of Pirates, and with the Jolly Roger flying from his masthead, gone into business in a big way. Realizing the need of proper income tax records, for the next 11 years he recorded all ships captured and the amount of plunder, as well as his current payroll, in a dairy.

The entries made in his own precise hand show 36 ships captured and sunk during that period—1784 to 1795. There is also a census of personnel: 8 officers, 43 able-bodied seamen, 23 wives (with no mention of whom they were married to), 12 manservants, 8 maidservants, 16 probationary prisoners, who include seven men, six women and two small boys. (Adding up the prisoners he seems to have lost track of one!)

A polished Spanish gentleman of the old school, he always gave his captives a break. He considered "walking the plank" uncouth, so the males were usually offered a chance of joining his band or being shot and tossed into the sea.

The more comely ladies always had the choice of accepting his amorous advances and joining his harem on Captiva Island, or being handed over to the gentle capricious whims of his cutthroat crew.

The less comely ladies either joined the ranks of the "8 maidservants" (see census) or were dished out the bullet and barracuda treatment at a spot reserved in Gasparilla Sound.

He knocked over one of his biggest cribs, and really made a name for himself in 1801.

A beautiful Spanish princess, Maria Louise, s a i l e d from Mexico on board a large Spanish galleon early in that year. With her were 11 hand-picked Mexican teen-age girls, who were to finish their education in Spain, and with each girl was a dowry chest, filled to the brim with shiny pieces of gold.

Our man of distinction spotted this plum 40 miles west of Boco Grande while he and the boys were out on a routine shore patrol. It was a pushover. He captured the galleon, murdered the crew, and took the gold and girls to Captiva Island where he gave the girls and the gold to his men.

All but Princess Maria Louise. One sight of her face, and Gasparilla had fallen in love to the point of talking marriage. For a week he preened and strutted, put on new velvet suits, and gave her a financial statement in between quoting passionate poems from Shakespeare and John Donne.

Maria, who could recognize a gangster when she met one, wasn't having any. With the hauteur of a true Spanish princess she made it clear that if there was such a thing as a "fate

worse than death" its name was Gasparilla.

Quick to see that he was getting nowhere, Gasparilla, in a lover's pique, turned her over to his hatchet man, one Roderigo Lopez who beheaded her with a cutlass.

Florida was taken over from Spain by an upstart country called the United States in 1819, and right away things started getting rough for the pirate paradise on Gasparilla Island. A man just couldn't get any rest what with a lot of U.S. war sloops nosing around day and night and disturbing the womenfolk on Captiva.

Gasparilla talked it over with his merry men. In 1821 by mutual consent they decided to divide their take of $30 million in gold and silver, the fruits of 39 busy years, and blow.

Just as he was about to sail away a large ship came into his bar, and Gasparilla, still a greedy old goat at 65, made his second, and this time fatal booboo.

She looked like a British merchantman and Gasparilla's mouth began to water at the thought of just one more cushy kill. Loading on sail, he gave quick chase and overtook her, only to find that instead of a British merchantman he'd caught a heavily armed U.S. man-of-war that was playing dirty pool.

The Stars and Stripes broke out at the masthead, false sides dropped down disclosing enough masked cannon to sink a Spanish armada. A single broadside and Jose Gaspar, alias Gasparilla, knew that his bloody days were done.

He's always hated a dirty trick! Winding a heavy anchor chain around his waist, and with one last defiant cry which probably meant "Oh, nuts!" in Spanish, Gasparilla, the lady-killer, took a header into the sea.

A SLIGHT MISTAKE

A man telephoned the police to report that thieves had stolen the steering wheel, brake pedal, accelerator, clutch pedal, and dashboard of his car. The police sergeant assured him the theft would be investigated.

Moments later, the telephone rang again. "Don't bother", said the same voice – this time somewhat blurred. "I got into the back seat by mistake."

the specialist

by James Reach

THE DOOR to the office in the dowdy, obsolescent building, something of an anachronism among its soaring glass-walled neighbors in the burgeoning business area east of Grand Central, bore the uncommunicative legend: *C. Pumfrit, Specialist.*

Had it occurred to the messenger boy to wonder what it might be that C. Pumfrit specialized in, he would have found few clues to guide him when he opened the door and entered the smallish one-room office. It was furnished rather like a combination library and music room, with its well-stacked book shelves, its scattered components of an expensive stereo sound system, and its hundreds of records heaped high on the floor in orderly piles. Only an elderly oak desk placed near the window and one steel file cabinet suggested that business of some nature might occasionally be transacted here.

At the boy's entrance, the sole occupant of the office, seated behind the desk in a comfortable leather armchair, looked up inquiringly from the large and well-thumbed volume in which

---

James Reach, author of several novels including THE INNOCENT ONE and BLIND GAMBIT (both reprinted recently by Collier Books) is a former Executive Vice-President of the Mystery Writers of America. Also well known as a playwright, Mr. Reach is now an agent, associated with Samuel French, Inc.

he had been immersed.

"C. Pumfrit?"

"I'm Pumfrit, yes."

"Got a delivery for you . . . Sign here, please."

Pumfrit signed; the boy handed over to him a small, unmarked white envelope, and departed.

Clarence Pumfrit slipped the envelope, unopened, into a pocket, marked his place in the book and set it aside, then got to his feet. A faint smile of pleasurable anticipation momentarily lighted his unremarkable features as he took down from a wall hook a stodgily conservative topcoat and a drab, dun-colored felt hat, and got into them.

Locking the office door behind him, Pumfrit walked across the corridor, rang for the wheezing self-service elevator, descend to the street, turned and headed west. Among the purposefully scurrying hordes that glutted the sidewalks during this late-afternoon rush hour, Clarence Pumfrit attracted no second glances. He might have served as the prototype for that poignant conception: the faceless face in a crowd. He was average in all the dimensions of weight and size and coloring, and his age might have been anything from 40 to 50 (it was actually 37). Put to it, one might have guessed him to be a mildly successful accountant, or a minor administrator.

One would have been absurdly mistaken.

Pumfrit turned into an entrance to Grand Central that led down a ramp to the main waiting room. He got the envelope from his pocket, ripped it open and extracted from it a small key which was stamped on its plastic handle with a locker number. Unmindful of the frantic jostling of the commuters in their recurrently desperate flight toward the dubious delights of suburbia, he walked alongside the banks of steel lockers that lined the walls of the waiting room until he found the one whose number matched that on the key. He opened the locker, which contained only a second white envelope, small and unmarked as had been the first. This envelope he thrust carelessly into a topcoat pocket, then he turned and walked toward an exit marked "Taxicabs."

The taxi deposited Pumfrit under the canopy of a sedately impressive apartment building in the fashionable East Sixties. There, with the solicitous assistance of a liveried doorman and an elevator operator, he was whisked upwards sixteen stories to his efficiency bachelor apartment. The apartment was, on a grander scale, a replica of Pumfrit's office: there was an even more elaborate stereo hook-up; custom-made bookcases occu-

pied much of the wall space; and above these were hung a few original oil paintings deriving from the prestigious period of the French Impressionists.

Comfortably ensconced on a lounge in his living room, a perfectly mixed Beefeater martini on the low table in front of him, the corner speakers serenading him with the lush harmonies of Rubinstein's new recording of the Grieg concerto, Pumfrit opened the envelope he had taken from the station locker. In it was a single small slip of paper on which were typed a name, "Jane Fennelly," and a street address in a small upstate city that had recently been in the news in connection with an investigation of widespread municipal corruption.

Pumfrit stared fixedly at the slip of paper for a minute or two, soundlessly repeating to himself the name and address until he was satisfied that they were indelibly recorded in his memory; then he lit a match and held it to the corner of the paper. He dropped it, burning, into an ashtray and watched while it shriveled into black ash.

Clarence Pumfrit leaned back against a cushion, sighing with deep satisfaction. Had he been feline, he would have purred; everything was going almost precisely as he had hoped. But then, he reminded himself sensibly, one could not materialize one's hoped-for castle in Spain without the pragmatic building blocks of careful and efficient planning. No, it had taken much more than merely hoping for him to arrive at the present imminent culmination of his life's desire. It had taken the courage which (it was Pumfrit's smug but perhaps valid conviction) almost he alone among living mortals possessed: the courage to know oneself completely — one's strengths and weaknesses, the assets and the liabilities of one's character, appearance and background — and then to follow implacably, with cold and impersonal logic, along the paths where that knowledge might lead one.

An expression that approached as close to sensual pleasure as it was possible for Pumfrit to achieve flashed fleetingly across his face; he was picturing to himself the delighted surprise with which Sylvia Acton would welcome his announcement of the fruition of his great plans for them. He had so far scrupulously refrained from even hinting to her about the existence of those plans, but now that they were almost ready to be put into effect — only tedious but minor details intervened — he decided it was time at least to prepare her for the splendid adventure upon which they were so soon to embark.

He rose, went to the telephone

table in the foyer and dialed her number. When he heard the throaty, vibrant voice – the only voice that had ever had the slightest power to move him against his inclinations – he said, "It's Clarence. May I come up? There's something I should tell you."

"Of course, darling. Anything exciting?"

He weighed his answer for a moment. "Perhaps."

"Make it as soon as possible. I'll have the ice bucket filled and the ingredients ready."

As the elevator took Pumfrit up the four flights to Sylvia Acton's penthouse apartment, he reflected upon the accident of their first encounter. As fellow tenants, their paths had crossed briefly several times before that; then, about six months ago, they had been caught together in this very elevator when a central power failure had left them suspended between floors for almost two hours. Her unflagging good spirits during that fatiguing wait, her wit and her sharp, articulate intelligence had piqued his interest, and when, at the ordeal's conclusion, she had invited him to her apartment for a drink, he had permitted himself the luxury of yielding to the impulse and accepting her invitation.

The incident had blossomed into a close friendship, as close as Pumfrit could safely allow it to become. Ever since the time, many years before, when he had evolved his master plan, he had rigidly excluded from his life any entangling personal relationships, lest they expose him to the probing into his affairs that he felt he must at all costs avoid. The peculiarly specialized nature of his work obligated him to solitude. Anonymity was a prerequisite of his trade (it was for that reason – that he might not be marked as different from his fellows –that he maintained an office and spent the workday hours in it).

So he had at first resisted Sylvia Anton's encroachment on his privacy. He cautioned himself that she was an unknown element, an *x* factor that might invalidate his meticulously worked-out theorem. But as he saw more and more of her – assuring himself the while that the liaison could be terminated at any time he wished – he began to perceive that she was, in every way that mattered to him, a perfect complement to himself. In their tastes in music, art, literature, the theatre; in their sensitive and informed appreciation of the cultural fruits of modern civilization, they struck an immediate and – to Pumfrit – a surprisingly close rapport. Surely, he told himself, this was the one woman he had ever known with whom he could live in harmony and mutual respect. It was

then he decided that, when the time came, Sylvia would share the rewards of his long years of preparation, the years of discipline and self-effacement. That time was now almost at hand; it only remained for him to inform Sylvia of his decision. Still, he could not completely shake off a niggling sense of disquiet at this radical deviation from his well-plotted course.

Sylvia greeted him with a peck on the cheek and an affectionate embrace. Pumfrit mixed martinis and Sylvia suggested that they take them out on the terrace. They made themselves comfortable in wicker armchairs and sipped at their drinks.

"Now," Sylvia asked, "do you want to tell me your news?"

"In a minute. Let me look at you first. I haven't seen you for a whole day, my dear."

His admiring glance encompassed a tallish brunette in her middle thirties, poised, faultlessly groomed, with a slightly heavy but voluptuously curved body, and facial features that were too bold to be called beautiful. She had been rather reticent with Pumfrit about her past: he knew that she was a widow, and he had gathered that her late husband had owned a wine and liquor business and had left her amply provided for.

Pumfrit underwent a subtle metamorphosis in Sylvia's presence. The colorless face took on character and expression; the drab nonentity somehow became a rather dashing man-of-the world type. He had a chameleon-like ability to respond to external stimuli and absorb the coloring of his surroundings. It was a trait that served him well in his work.

"Darling, I'm waiting," Sylvia reminded him.

"Yes . . ." To gain time for the proper arranging of his thoughts, Pumfrit rose and walked toward the edge of the terrace. On that side, there was an unobstructed view of the East River, and beyond, of the bedroom land of Queens.

"Careful, darling," Sylvia called to him. "They haven't fixed that railing yet." A section of the waist-high wooden railing had rotted in the weather and fallen away. "The superintendant keeps promising to send up a carpenter, but he hasn't."

Pumfrit turned and walked back to her. "I'm afraid I'm to be deprived of the delights of your companionship for a while."

"Oh!" She looked gratifyingly disappointed. "Another of those stuffy business trips?"

He nodded. "I have to leave in the morning."

"How long will you be gone this time?"

"Depends on the circumstances. Perhaps only a day or two; say a week at the outside."

"And that's what you wanted to say to me?"

"No — or not all of it." He hesitated. "I wanted to say how — how very attached I've become to you; how much I dislike these temporary separations. And that I have every hope that this may be the last of them."

She looked up at him expectantly, waiting for him to expand upon that theme, but when he did not, she said, "I, too. And where will you be going this time?"

"Ah — the midwest," he improvised. "Kansas City."

"What a bother!" She pouted prettily and asked, "Darling, should I be jealous?"

He smiled his gentle reproach at her. "Such a sentiment is unworthy of you, my dear."

She shook her head. "You're not making sufficient allowance for the frailty of my sex. In situations like this, jealousy is a reflex with us. Any female this side of senility would automatically conjure up hateful visions of the bosomy blond delights that awaited her man on such mysterious disappearances."

"Mysterious?" Pumfrit managed a deprecating chuckle.

"Well, you know you've always avoided talking about it."

"To spare you the boredom. It's a frightfully dull subject, my dear, I assure you."

"Perhaps. But —" Sylvia looked away, thoughtfully. "Under the circumstances, you can scarcely blame me for being curious . . ."

Curious! The word was a portent of menace to Pumfrit's way of life, and again he experienced a qualm of misgivings at his deliberate evasion of the solemn compact he had long ago made with himself. He gave silent but fervent thanks that the trip on which he was leaving tomorrow would be his last business assignment.

On the following evening, Clarence Pumfrit pulled up his rented car in front of a modest frame bungalow on a pleasant tree lined street in the small upstate city. Getting an attache case from the seat beside him, he stepped out of the car.

Although he had done nothing whatever to disguise his appearance, one might now have guessed, as he made his way along a cement walk to the bungalow's side entrance, that he was a poll-taker, or an interviewer in motivational research. This time, one would have been entirely correct.

In answer to Pumfrit's ring, the area around the doorway was flooded in glaring light, the door was opened a few inches on a taut brass chain, and a harried-looking young woman gazed suspiciously at him through the aperture.

"Miss — ah — Jane Fennelly?"

"What do you want? If you're selling something —"

"Oh, no, nothing like that. I'm interviewing a selected number of subjects in this community about their buying habits, and you're on my list."

Miss Fennelly's suspicions seemed partly, but not completely, mollified. "I haven't time for things like that," she said.

"It will only take a few minutes, and if you still suspect me of trying to sell you something, perhaps you'd like to look at this."

He took from his pocket an identity card in a glassine envelope. It bore an official-looking seal and it stated that the bearer, one Thomas J. Jones, was an authorized representative of the American Academy of Business Research, and that any information given to him would be held in the strictest confidence.

Miss Fennelly glanced from the card to Pumfrit's face, and it was obvious that she found as much assurance in the latter as the former. "Well — you *look* all right," she said, dropping the chain from its groove and holding the door open. "Come in."

She ushered Pumfrit into a bright, chintzy living room and invited him to sit with her on the sofa. "I'm sorry I made such a fuss about letting you in," she said, "but you can't imagine what I've been through lately."

"Indeed?"

"You just wouldn't believe it, Mr. Jones. I've been hounded and threatened and — ever since the shooting."

"What shooting was that?"

"Oh, you're from out of town, so you wouldn't know. I guess it had something to do with the rackets investigation we've been having here. Anyway, this minor hoodlum, Augie Krantz — he'd testified at the hearing just the day before — was shot to death right outside the library, where I work. I saw the whole thing through a window and —" She broke off, shuddering slightly.

"Must've been a frightful shock to you."

"It was, but that's not the worst of it. Apparently the men who did it — there were two of them — think I can identify them. I can't. They had their hats pulled down over their eyes, and it all happened so fast, you know, and — but they won't believe me. They keep phoning me at all hours of the day and night with horrible threats about what will happen to me if I testify against them."

"Couldn't you ask for police protection?"

"I —" She looked down at her lap, where her hands were worrying a balled handkerchief. "I don't dare. I've been warned not to if — if I want to go on living. But —" She made a visible but not very successful ef-

fort to shake off her harrowing fears. "That's not what you want to talk about, is it, Mr. Jones?"

Pumfrit looked at her for a moment. In repose she was not unattractive, and she seemed sensitive and intelligent. He felt an unaccustomed pang of compassion. *A pity,* he thought, *and probably unnecessary; they're probably making a mistake* — But he caught himself up short, annoyed at allowing himself to go sentimental like that, even momentarily. *Anyway,* he assured himself, *it's the last time; she's my last subject.*

"Now," he said briskly, "If I can just have your answers to a few questions, Miss Fennelly . . ."

About an hour later, Pumfrit emerged from the bungalow and walked toward the parked car. Another car, which had been standing with its motor idling a short distance up the street, pulled out from the curb and gathered speed to pass. Pumfrit, always alert in such situations to anything bordering on the unusual, glanced sharply at the woman driver of the other car. Her face was averted from him and, in the deepening evening shadows, he could gather only a nebulous impression of her looks; but that was enough to keep him frowning behind the wheel of the car before he started it up and drove away. *No, no, quite impossible,* he was telling himself, *it couldn't have been she; that would be stretching the rules of probability a bit far.* He sighed unhappily: *And now am* I letting my imagination (which he had always prided himself on holding in tight rein) *play tricks with me?*

In his room in a downtown commercial hotel, where he was registered as Thomas J. Jones, Pumfrit reviewed the information about Miss Fennelly that he had gleaned from her during their interview. It was comprehensive and revealing. He knew that she was a librarian who lived alone, and that she was a rather sedentary type with no immediate family and few close friends; he had learned her working schedule and how she traveled to and from her job; he was aware of when and where she shopped, what she did for recreation (books, lectures, an occasional foreign film); he had, in short, an almost complete picture of how she customarily spent her waking hours.

The prognosis was satisfactory to Pumfrit; it promised to be a routine operation with no foreseeable complications. A meticulous technician, he would devote another day or two — or all the time that proved necessary — to checking and rechecking his information. Then he would select, from several alternative methods that had already sug-

gested themselves to him, the most appropriate way of exterminating Miss Fennelly.

Then it will be over, he thought, going to the begrimed window and looking out unseeingly, *and we — Sylvia and I — can begin to live. And there'll be nothing they can do to stop me.*

He always thought of them as "they." He did not know specifically — or want to know — who or what they were. It was enough that they had the power, expropriated by force or corruption, or simply by default, to get what they wanted, and the means to pay generously for the getting. Four or five times a year, on the average, "they" would want someone removed, in New York or Chicago or Buffalo or Detroit, or in any of a dozen other cities, and Pumfrit would receive a locker key in an unmarked envelope.

In an age of specialization, Pumfrit's specialty was, so far as he could know, unique: he arranged for accidental deaths.

A man falls, screaming, from a crowded subway platform under the wheels of an oncoming train. A woman steps unwarily off a curbstone into the path of a heavy truck. A rowboat overturns and its occupant drowns. In each case the inquest verdict is death by accidental means, and "they" may have been spared the jeopardy of a homicide investigation. For accidental death has become so commonplace in our urbanized, mechanized, roaring, hurtling society, that we have learned to accept it with smug complacency (HOPE TO HOLD HOLIDAY TRAFFIC DEATHS UNDER 400).

"They" paid Pumfrit a yearly retainer equivalent to the annual salary of a high-echelon executive in big business, plus a substantial bonus for each assignment successfully completed (in twelve years he had never had a failure). Born poor but with the unshakable conviction that he was destined to die rich, a pauper with the appetites of a sybarite, the young Pumfrit floundered around, obeying all the time-honored precepts and following all the weathered signposts marking the tortuous pathway to success, until in a moment of illuminating perception he had seen that, for him, the path was a spiral that endlessly doubled back upon itself, and that he would have to find a shortcut to the summit where the good life could be lived.

He found it. Armed with his hard-won knowledge of himself, he gravitated inevitably toward the concentration of tainted wealth in the hands of those who had such an obvious need of his extraordinary talents. He had allowed himself ten to twelve years to accumulate, by savings and conservative investments, enough funds to underwrite his

(as he called it to himself) "escape to civilization."

And now everything was ready — the richly furnished villa in suburban Paris; the plane reservations; the new identities for Sylvia and himself, with the concommitant passports, papers and such, supplied at a suitable stipend by other specialists — they had only to pack up and go.

He had realized, of course, that "they" would not look with favor upon his going; that if they knew of his plans, they would undoubtedly t a k e stringent measures to restrain him. But he had made his preparations with the utmost circumspection; and his disappearance from their purlieu would be so final, he believed, that they would not know how to start looking for him, and would, in time, forget him.

Pumfrit turned from the window. A sudden thought made him cluck to himself ruefully. If that *had* been Sylvia in the other car, he would of course have to kill her. What a shame that would be, what a waste! He sincerely hoped that he had been mistaken.

Two evenings later, after satisfying himself that Jane Fennelly was under no other surveillance but his own, Pumfrit decided on a rather daring method for her disposal. It was one that appealed to his artistry and that he had considered during prior assignments but that he had regretfully discarded because of the more than ordinary element of risk it entailed. This time, however, he could not resist it; Miss Fennelly, living in semi-seclusion as she did, was the ideal subject for such a method; and it provided for Pumfrit an appropriate flourish with which to sign *finis* to a distinguished career.

Later that night, Pumfrit emerged from the Fennelly bungalow, his business there having been completed with precision and dispatch. Although he had been on the alert for it, he had in the intervening days seen nothing of the car with the woman driver who might or might not have been Sylvia Acton. Now, as he proceeded cautiously along the walk toward the street, he stopped short: from approximately the same spot at the curb it had occupied previously, the car was again starting up. Instead of passing, the woman this time made a U-turn and drove off in the opposite direction. Pumfrit had only a brief glimpse of the back of her head under a dim street light, and again he could not be sure it was Sylvia. *But,* he told himself, badly shaken, *neither can I be sure it wasn't. And I have to be — very sure indeed.*

He got into the rented car and drove downtown. There he

found a drug store with a vacant phone booth, and dialed Sylvia's number long distance. He counted ten unanswered rings before he hung up. It was ten-thirty and, at that hour, she might be with friends, or lingering over a late dinner at a favorite restaurant, or in any of a dozen other places. He left the phone booth, sighing wistfully. It wasn't conclusive, of course; still he wished very much that she had been at home to answer his call.

And if it was Sylvia he had seen, Pumfrit asked himself as he drove his car into the hotel garage, then why? The answer seemed obvious: she had supplied it herself at their last meeting. Jealousy. If it turned out that way, it would be a tragic paradox, that her ridiculously petty and unjustified impulse should, in effect, have sealed her own death warrant.

Pumfrit lingered in the upstate city until the local newspaper appeared the following afternoon. He bought a copy, looked for and found, halfway down the second page, the gratifyingly unsensational report:

LIBRARIAN DIES IN FREAK ACCIDENT

———

Had been Witness in Krantz Slaying

———

Miss Jane Fennelly, employed for the past seven years in the downtown Carnegie Library, was found scalded to death late last night in the bathroom of her home at 454 Oakmont Drive. Neighbors became alarmed when they noticed clouds of steam pouring out of the partially open bathroom window, forced their way inside and found Miss Fennelly dead in the tub, with the hot shower water running full blast.

It was at first suspected that Miss Fennelly had been the victim of foul play, since she had been a principal witness to the "shoot-and-run" murder last month of local racketeer, Augie Krantz. However, from a laceration on the back of Miss Fennelly's head, police investigators surmised that she had slipped while taking a shower and had hit her head on the corner of a protruding glass shelf. Knocked unconscious by the force of the blow, the officers theorized, she had been fatally scalded by the unimpeded flow of hot water. Lending weight to this theory was the fact that the corner of the glass shelf, which had been chipped, bore recent traces of blood . . .

Early that evening, Pumfrit was on his way up to Sylvia Acton's apartment. He had phoned her on his arrival a few minutes before, and she had invited him to come right up. Now he would know. He was convinced that

she would be unable to dissemble successfully when he confronted her; so now he would know whether he was indeed faced with the disagreeable necessity of arranging one final accident. He was prepared for that unpleasant eventuality with a method suggested by the broken terrace railing; an unimaginative method, perhaps, but serviceable.

Sylvia answered his ring and admitted him with her usual warm cordiality. She had martinis in the mixer, ready to be poured, and at Pumfrit's suggestion, they carried them out to the terrace. A quick glance satisfied him that the superintendant hadn't been uncharacteristically efficient in his absence: the missing section of the railing had not been replaced.

"How was your trip, darling?" Sylvia asked. She looked more ravishing than ever in a flowing, pastel-blue housecoat. "Successful, I hope?"

"Quite." Pumfrit was looking straight into her eyes as he continued: "By the way, I telephoned you Wednesday evening, but you weren't here."

"Wednesday?" She thought about it for a moment. "Oh, that was the night Ellen Byers invited me to the opening of the new Coward musical. Her husband phoned at the last minute that he wouldn't be able to make it."

"How was it?"

She shrugged. "Typically Coward. I wouldn't rave, although some of the critics did. The program is inside somewhere if you'd like to see it."

"Thank you." He had kept regarding her closely across the small wicker table at which they were seated, and now he felt a welcome surge of relief. It couldn't have been she! Nothing had changed; she was her own charming self. He must after all have been mistaken, the dupe of his overactive imagination. *No* more accidents, he thought gratefully.

"Did you call for some special reason, darling?"

"Yes . . ." He rose, moved around the table and took her hand. "The most special reason imaginable. I told you this might be my last trip, and it was. I've — retired, my dear."

"Retired?"

"I'm going away, and I hope you'll come with me — no, don't speak yet, please — as my wife, of course. I've fascinating plans for us, my dear. We can have all the things we want, do all the things we've always wanted to do, *ad infinitum*."

He beamed at her, experiencing for almost the first time in his life a glow of warm and unselfish pleasure. The glow, however, didn't last long. Sylvia was greeting his announcement with unexpected reserve.

She frowned up at him.

"You're really serious about that, aren't you?" she asked.

"Of course! I have never, I assure you, been more serious in all my life."

"Yes." She sighed heavily. "I was afraid of that. The pity is that I've grown genuinely fond of you. But — they were right, after all."

He didn't as yet understand. "They?"

She had risen from the table. From the flowing housecoat she now produced a small but very businesslike revolver and held it pointed, inexplicably, at his chest. He felt impaled to the spot on which he stood, incapable of speech or movement, like a tiny creature of the field watching the snake's mouth opening to envelop it.

"Why did you have to be so stupid, darling? Why couldn't you have been sensible and realized that we couldn't possibly let you get away from us?"

We? Us? Of course! They!

Sylvia, her gun poking into his chest, was prodding him backward toward the terrace's edge. "They guessed months ago that you were up to something like this, so I was assigned to you. You see, I'm something of a specialist myself: my specialty is dealing with defectors . . . And it could have been so lovely between us." (Pumfrit found this sentiment strangely evocative.) "But now — I'm afraid this must be goodbye, darling."

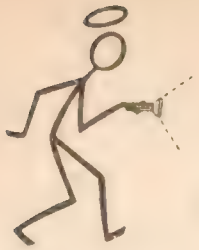
He made the mistake of turning his head then. He wouldn't have believed her capable of the strength behind the hand that sent him stumbling through the broken railing and out into space.

Had he been granted somewhat more time than it took him to plummet the twenty stories to the street, it's possible that Clarence Pumfrit might have constructed a more worthy epitaph for himself than the cliche that actually occurred to him on the way down: *My God, I'm hoist with mine own petard!*

UNSOLICITED SUBMISSIONS

This magazine is not a market for unsolicited submissions. Every effort is being made to act upon such submissions as have been received either at the office of the Editor or the publisher, but a number of factors have caused a considerable delay in the return of many of these manuscripts. I apologize for this delay.

H.S.S.



HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO GET YOUR COPY OF "saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE EACH MONTH?

if you want the greatest possbile variety within the entire range of mystery, detective and crime fiction by the most eminent and most imaginative and capable writers . . . . . *Subscribe to* "saint

if tables of contents multiple-starred with the names of such greats as John Dickson Carr, Sax Rohmer, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Agatha Christie, Baynard Kendrick, Craig Rice, Philip Wylie and many others . . . plus a COMPLETE MYSTERY each month by LESLIE CHARTERIS—creator of the SAINT, one of the most popular characters in fiction today, give you a thrill . . . *Subscribe to* "saint

if you're having trouble finding THE saint on your newsstand and you want to be sure of getting us regularly and on time . . . THEN . . . just clip the coupon below and mail it to us together with your check or money order — and THE saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE will arrive on time each month.

FICTION PUBLISHING COMPANY
30 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.
Kindly enter my subscription for THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE.
One year (12 issues) at $4.00 ☐ Two years (24 issues) at $7.00 ☐
3 years (36 issues) at $9.00 ☐
Additional postage: Foreign $1.00 per year
Please remit by check or money order

NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
CITY, ZONE, STATE .....
Please Print

863

what's new in crime

by Stefan Santesson

Doesn't this seem familiar? "The papers have been full of rumours that Hobson was once connected with criminal gangs and might still be. I don't know if it's true or not. . . ." The speaker is Chief Inspector Henry Bayles, in charge of the New York area, and he is about to assign Grant Kirby, United States Postal Inspector, to tracking down the man or men who had sent a bomb through the mails to the man all agreed would have been the next Mayor of New York—if he had lived.

The time is the "gay" Nineties and the victim is Big Frank Hobson, who had started as a dock worker on the New York waterfront during the War between the States—there were some who said that he had been the leader of a gang of criminals operating on the waterfront; thirty years later, he owned a mansion on Fifth Avenue, he was a member of the Union Club where many new millionaires were denied, and he was running for Mayor against a man who lived only three houses away from him, who had tried to keep him out of the neighborhood and out of the Union Club, and who now

Mr. Santesson, editor of this magazine since 1956 and former editor, between 1945 and 1952, of the Unicorn Mystery Book Club, continues his column of comments on recent mystery and suspense novels and other material of interest.

was determined that Big Frank should not be the next Mayor of New York

Clay Richards' DEATH OF AN ANGEL (Bobbs Merrill, $3.50) is a more than interesting novel about an aspect of life in the Nineties—"the Gay Nineties'—which is usually ignored in favor of the more attractive memorabilia which distracted grandfather's attention fully as much as similar things will distract so many in these days of the tamer tabloids.

United States Postal Inspector Grant Kirby had to face the reality that the police officers investigating the murder—almost every police officer, for that matter—would in all likelihood owe their job to Tammany, who supposedly had been playing games with Hobson, just in case he'd win. And within days he realized that the answer was to be found in the rivalry between the Five Pointers—with whom Hobson had worked—and the Whyos, one of the gangs that came close to being their own Law in their part of town.

Extremely interesting. Don't miss this!

It is always pleasant to welcome back an old friend, and Homicide's Inspector Schmidt, met with again in George Bagby's MURDER'S LITTLE HELPER (Doubleday, $3.50) is precisely this. George Bagby, who is also Hampton Stone—and also Aaron Marc Stein—is one of the most pleasant writers in the field. Schmitty, who has been with us for a long time now, copes with a mixed bag of witnesses and suspects with his usual efficiency. As he probes further into the tangled affairs of the dead woman who had been fished out of the East River at two o'clock in the morning, some days before, there is a multiplicity of clues pointing to the one man who did kill her and who, having killed once, found it advisable to kill again. Do read this.

Hubert Monteilhet's THE PRAYING MANTISES (Simon & Schuster), the winner of the Inner Sanctum Mystery Award for 1962 which had already been awarded the French Le Grand Prix de la Litterature Policiere, was received with considerable interest last year. Monteilhet's new novel, RETURN FROM THE ASHES (Simon & Schuster, $3.50) is the story of a woman who to all effects and purposes returns from the dead—she is returning from a concentration camp at the close of World War II—and who returns to the man whom she had loved and married, and to the daughter whom she had never given herself time to love, only to walk into a complicated situation where these two, who have be-

lieved that she is dead—who wanted to believe that she was dead—have their own plans for the future. Do read this.

Ann Head's EVERYBODY ADORED CARA (Doubleday, $3.50) *is* the story of the many who did adore Cara, and of the somebody who killed her . . . An interesting group of credible and almost likable people. Do read this.

Darrel T. Langart's ANYTHING YOU CAN DO (Doubleday, $3.50), while a science fiction novel, is also the story of the efforts of Government City, in the year 2081, to establish contact with an alien who has killed a considerable number of people for reasons yet to be understood, and to then make use of the alien's undoubted technical knowledge.

Cool, calculating police work is involved, including the eventually much publicised calling in of an investigator for Lloyd's of London when the alien kills the man originally in charge of the project. Interesting.

Hillary Waugh's BORN VICTIM (Doubleday, $3.50) deals, on the other hand, with the very real ills of our times. Thirteen year old Barbara Markle disappears and Police Chief Fellows must find the answer not only to her disappearance but, very soon, to the problem of who had killed her. The reason for the murder is entirely credible and is why I talk of the very real ills of our times—sociological ills if you wish. It is astoning that more people do not die because of the fears and the frustrations, the complexes and the doubts, which are so much a part of the makeup of all too many people in these days. Sensitive and good writing. Do not miss this.

A. A. Fair's FISH OR CUT BAIT (Morrow, $3.50), Erle Stanley Gardner's latest Donald Lam and Bertha Cool mystery, has the familiar pace — and the familiar personalities. Decorative and otherwise. Bertha Cool continues to be somewhat less than endearing and Donald Lam — but no! There is no need to tell you! Don't miss it though!

Christopher Landon's DEAD MEN RISE UP NEVER (William Sloane, $3.75), raises an interesting possibility which it would be unfair to comment upon at greater length at this time. The late Colin Headley, somewhat less than attractive in life (at least to those who knew him), manages in death to thoroughly complicate the lives of those who had been closest to him. Or thought so . . . There is a moral to this story, uneven though it is, which needs under-

lining. Perhaps the hero, Harry Andrews, improbable though he will seem at times, is the perfect instrument for this truth.

Captain Jose Da Silva, liason officer between the Brazilian police and Interpol, continues to be fully as unpredictable and as delightful as in Robert L. Fish's earlier THE FUGITIVE, discussed here some months ago. ISLE OF THE SNAKES (Simon & Schuster, $3.50), deals with Da Silva's search for an explanation of a map for which one man has already died, painfully, and for which others will also die, somewhat more quickly.

It is however a mistake to be conscious only of the carnival—quality of death there in the streets and in the villages where Da Silva hunts his killers. In a hungry country — it is not unimportant to the story to remember that there are many hungry people in Brazil — mores tend to be somewhat more elementary, the amused chuckles about "you incredible Brazilians" to the contrary. Extremely interesting. Do not miss this.

Bryan Peters' THE BIG H Holt, Rinehart, Winston, $3.50) introduces us to a British agent, Anthony Brandon, who will at first seem to be true to the formula for these indestructible men who are only concerned with the job at hand, and not with the cost to themselves, or to those around them. The novel poses the possibility, with some plausibility, or a series of developments on the Intelligence front of the Cold War which could perhaps be just so—though one hopes not. Interesting.

Margaret Lynn's MRS. MAITLAND'S AFFAIR (Doubleday, $3.95) is an interesting study of the dark and brooding man with whom Kathy Maitland falls so overwhelmingly in love. At long last life is going to mean something for this woman who has lived for so long with the knowledge that the one-time relationship with her husband is dead. Or seems dead. An interesting group of very believable people.

Margaret Scherf's THE MYSTERY OF THE VELVET BOX (Franklin Watts, $2.95) is an attractive story for teenagers by the author of THE DIPLOMAT AND THE GOLD PIANO (Doubleday, $3.50), reviewed here recently. Four young people, thoroughly likable, try to solve the puzzle of an inheritance left to one of them by an eccentric old woman — or so she'd seemed. There had been method to her seeming madness however and in the discovery of this the youngsters have adventures — and near escapes — which make them the more de-

termined to find the answer to the strange events around them.

Bill Knox' THE GREY SENTINELS (Doubleday, $3.50) starts with the death of a retired sea captain, the sole occupant of an island bird sanctuary off the West Highland coast. In trying to find the reason for the murder of this apparently harmless old man the two city detectives, Glasgow Detective Inspectors Colin Thane and Phil Moss, find themselves working with men who hunt sharks and occasionally do a "wee salmon-poaching job", and some considerably less attractive personalities. Don't miss this!

Milo March return in M E. Chaber's SOFTLY AS THE NIGHT (Holt, Rinehart, Winston, $3.50). There is something wrong about the double-indemnity fire claim Intercontinental Insurance is being asked to pay, and March's Insurance Service Corporation is called in for the answer to who is responsible —and whether Intercontinental must pay. Fast moving.

George Malcolm-Smith's THE LADY FINGER (Doubleday, $3.50) deals with just that—a woman who is prepared to finger those responsible for the raid on the Massasoit National Bank and Trust Company. Nutmeg Indemnity has a very personal interest in locating the bank robbers—Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars worth of interest—making for some unusual adventures for Nutmeg's own "young Otis Minton."

John Le Carre's CALL ME DEAD (Walker, $3.50) is that rare thing—a credible novel about credible people who, almost incidentally, happens also to be spies.

It is one of those truths which all writers acknowledge but so few do anything about, that the successful espionage agent is seldom the gentleman amateur (or the decidedly less gentlemanly variant of same met with in some paperbacks . . .), but instead men such as George Smiley in this novel, short, fat, apparently close to "impossible" as people, and nevertheless specialists in a field where your survival depends on less obvious traits. Don't miss this.

Douglas Warner's DEATH OF A SNOUT (Walker, $3.50), a novel about London's underworld, is the story of the murder of a police informer (the "snout") and the subsequent attempt to frame the tough but unorthodox Detective Inspector Johnoe for whom the informer had "worked", and who is feared by the murderer. The novel will no doubt startle some whose

picture of the London underworld is somewhat dated. Do read this.

Ed McBain's LIKE LOVE (Simon & Schuster, $3.50), is straight police procedure at the precinct level, with the familiar McBain deftness. As always, these are credible, believable people who are investigated and coped with by Steve Carella, Meyer Meyer, and the others of the 87th Squad. Good.

Jeff DiMarco, Claim Adjuster for the insurance company with whom the dead man had a Hundred Thousand Dollar policy, realized it was murder. There were rumours that the dead man had done this and that, and the police have their doubts about the widow. DiMarco's problem, in Doris Miles Disney's FIND THE WOMAN (Doubleday, $3.50) is simply to get at the truth, and to do this as quickly as possible. DiMarco, as always, does this with his usual sensitivity to what makes people—and killers—tick . . . One of the author's best books in recent years. Do read this.

The irrepressible Mr. Horace is with us again in Seldon Truss' TECHNIQUE FOR TREACHERY (Doubleday, $3.50) as the murder of the Chief Security Officer at the Ministry of Research triggers immediate police action. Superintendent Gidleigh, assisted by the dead man's son, Detective Inspector Albury (and unofficially, and very much against Gidleigh's will, by Mr. Horace) eventually establishes who is responsible, coming across, while so doing, a rather strange group of characters. Do read this.

Moss Magill has been Sheriff of Notlaw, Colorado (alt. 8997 feet, permanent pop. 390 or thereabouts) for nearly thirty years now. Certain unperceptive souls, met with on previous occasions, have been known to compare Notlaw "to a collection of empty packing-cases thrown down in the middle of nothing and surrounded by wind, sand, and mountains", but to theSheriff it is "the finest town on earth or in outer space", and there are times when you can understand this. Dorothy Gardiner's new Moss Magill novel, LION IN WAIT (Doubleday, $3.50) is as thoroughly delightful as her earlier novels. An added bonus is Henry, who at one stage assists the Sheriff in his case.

I only have one complaint!

Moss Magill's many friends have to wait much too long for the latest news from Notlaw, Colorado!

mrs. mumpson's strange pleasure

by Miriam Allen deFord

MRS. LILI MUMPSON, Cleveland, Ohio," she wrote in a firm little hand. Everything about her, her carefully waved white hair, her expertly corseted figure, the Scotch tweed suit and the Italian shoes and the Mercedes-Benz she drove wearing white pigskin gloves, testified that she expected the best there was and could pay for it. She got it—a $40 a day cottage. "I may be staying a month or more; it's too cold for me back East," she chirped brightly. Ted Hannaway, who was on desk duty at the Camino Real Motel and Cottages, beamed.

She settled in and had dinner that evening in the Sunset Dining Room, but they seldom saw her there after that except for breakfast. There were still fancier places to eat, even for an unescorted elderly lady, in the area around the resort. She had no visitors, received no first-class mail, and drove out only for these dinnertime excursions. What she did receive was daily or weekly copies, as the case might be, of every local newspaper with a 100-mile radius.

Miriam Allen deFord, author of STONE WALLS (Chilton), a study of the prison reform movement which we hope to review soon in this magazine, the award-winning THE OVERBURY AFFAIR (also Chilton), etc., etc., will be remembered for her recent THE SILVER SPOONS (SMM, May 1963), THE OLEANDER (SMM, Jan. 1962), ARTUR'S STORY (SMM Febr. 1963), etc.

Most of the day she spent, comfortably ensconced beside the swimming pool (which she never entered) reading those papers with absorbed and fascinated interest.

It became too much for Ted Hannaway's curiosity. Passing her on errands, he progressed from polite smiles to casual greetings, and then, not by invitation but without rebuff, to pausing for a few minutes' conversation.

After about a week he ventured: "Mrs. Mumpson, you certainly must like to keep up with the news!"

She glanced at him calmly over her rhinestone-studded reading glasses.

"Oh," she said, "it's a specialized interest. All I ever real amout is murder. It's my hobby."

"M-murder?"

"You do have such interesting cases out here. Take this Montgomery trial that's being held in San Ambrosio—the gigolo who married the widow and then murdered her.

"They don't know yet if he murdered her," said Hannaway for the honor of his sex. "That's what they're trying to find out."

"Of course he did,' said Mrs. Mumpson crisply. "Let me tell you something, young man; *I'm* a widow with a lot of money, and I know what men of his kind are like. One of them tried to make a fool of me—once, and it cost me plenty before I got wise to him. The gas chamber's too good for the creature."

"Why don't you go see the trial yourself, if you're so interested? San Ambrosio is only about two hours' drive from here."

She took off her glasses and gazed at him coldly.

"Ladies," she stated, "do not attend criminal trials in backwoods courthouses. I can get all the information I desire from the *San Ambrosio Gazette*, to which I have subscribed, with all your other local papers, for the sole purpose amusing myself without incurring such inconvenience and indignity."

"Er—I see," said Ted hastily; and found immediate business elsewhere. A nice, gruesome hobby, he thought with a shudder. Mrs. Mumpson smiled slightly to herself and went on reading. *That* impudent person would never speak so familiarly to her again.

It *was* a fascinating case for any crime afficionado. Warren Montgomery was a complete rotter of a quite usual type. Forty-ish, lithe, suave, with melting brown eyes and a deferential smile, he specialized in preying on older women, recently widowed and left fortunes they did not know how to handle. The places — cruise ships, resort hotels, dude ranches — where

such lonely, childless rich women gather were his hunting-ground. If he were not being tried for murder, he would have been wanted in half a dozen places on charges of bigamy and theft, for both of which, under various names, he had done time in the past.

But now, it seemed, he had over-reached himself. His latest, ...perhaps his last, victim had been one Mrs. Marianne Ellersby, 66, four years widowed, married for 47 years to a gruff, acquisitive man 20 years her senior. She had no relatives except a few in-laws, resentful at receiving no legacy, and a few remote cousins without expectations and therefore uninterested in her welfare. She had been very pretty and she was still attractive. She had no business experience whatever, and her husband, for all his, had not had the sense to leave her his considerable estate in trust. She took no advice from the old lawyer who was the executor. She had never known love, or fun, or freedom, and she yearned for all three. She was the ideal set-up for Warren Montgomery. Mrs. Mumpson, whose situation was or had been so similar, had good reason for her avid interest.

Where Montgomery and Mrs. Ellersby had met was vague, but the courtship was brief and brisk. They were married by a justice of the peace in Florida just before they flew to Bermuda. The fact that Montgomery already had at least two undivorced living wives was quite unknown to her and no barrier to him, since each of his marriages had been under a different name. They had a wonderful six months—first the Caribbean, then the Riviera, then Paris. The bride paid for everything, of course; poor Warren had had nothing but bad luck all his life, financially. But what a lover, what a husband, what a playfellow! Nobody reminded Marianne that the huge age-difference which had separated her from her first husband now obtained, in reverse, between her and her second. She could afford the clothing and the cosmetic care that took years off her apparent age; and Warren, devoted and ardent as ever, basked in luxury.

It was beginning to irk him, just the same. Sports cars and jeweled cigarette cases and royal hotel suites were all very well, but in his chosen line of work Warren Montgomery was a serious professional. The objective was not a lifelong spree, but the acquiring of money as the result of a business venture.

Whether in the past Montgomery had ever trusted to murder as the solution of a recurrent problem is not known; if he had, he had managed to avoid all sus-

picion. His usual method was increasing neglect, plus discreetly revealed infidelity, all ending in a grand bust-up, a bit of extortion and blackmail (what woman wants it publicly known that she has made an utter fool of herself?), or a quick divorce following a lump sum settlement to keep him away and quiet in the future.

But criminals are human beings. Montgomery was growing middle-aged and tired. He had reached the point where it was pleasant to think of retiring with a snug little fortune of his own. There was even, back in Georgia, his authentic first wife, and a daughter, now almost grown, both undoubtedly susceptible to the charm that was his chief asset. He began to dream of settling down in his old home town under his real name, a lazy, genial dispenser of social favors and civic largesse. He was patient, and he could plan and wait.

"Darling," he said to Marianne, "I have a wonderful idea. Aren't you getting sick of all these foreign places and of never hearing our own tongue? What do you say we fly home again and take a long, marvelous tour together, just us two, by car through our own Southwest? You've never been there, have you?"

Primed by travel folders collected for weeks, he poured forth a stream of descriptive enchantment. Marianne was thrilled. "Oh, Warren," she cried, "it will be another honeymoon!"

It was. "Let's avoid the great big garish places, precious," Warren suggested. "Let's pretend we're just gypsies."

The bright yellow little foreign car flashed from motel to motel through Arizona, New Mexico, and Southern California. "Mr. and Mrs. Warren Montgomery," in Warren's distinctive hand, appeared on register after register. In betweeen, they saw everything—the Carlsbad Caverns, the desert flowers, rodeos, Indian dances, the Pueblos, the Grand Canyon. It lasted for four full months, right through from January to the beginning of May.

And then it stopped. The last place they stayed was at a swank desert motel in a huge but underpopulated southwestern California county with no large towns and a tiny county seat, San Ambrosio. Mr. and Mrs. Warren Montgomery spent a night there and drove away in the morning in their bright yellow car. Their names were seen on no more registers.

For a long time nobody inquired. There was no reason to. Marianne had long ago severed connections with the old lawyer. The few friends who knew of her second marriage had long since been neglected into alien-

ation. And before they had left America in the first place, Warren had persuaded her to sell all old Joseph Ellersby's gilt-edged stocks and government bonds and to convert her entire fortune into diamonds and cash. Marianne thought it was a wonderful idea. The diamonds were cached in a safe-deposit box in a New York bank, taken in both their names; but she was shrewd—she kept the keys. The cash, except for an enormous supply of traveler's checks, was in joint accounts in half a dozen banks in different cities. Warren was far too smart to draw on any of these until he was sure there would be no hue and cry over her disappearance. (That, at least, was the contention of the prosecutor in the trial in San-Ambrosio).

Warren's contention was different. His defense was that so far as he knew, Marianne was still alive—where, he did not know. He said they had had a big, sudden quarrel that morning, that she had left him, bag and baggage, at the nearest town that had an airport; and that from that day to this he had had no word from her and no knowledge of her whereabouts.

It was a pretty thin defense. His lawyer had failed to find that a Mrs. Ellersby or Montgomery had bought a plane ticket that day at that airfield. She could have used a different name, of course, and at that distance of time no one could say if a woman of her description had boarded a plane there. He acknowledged that he had taken the car; but it was his, a gift from her, like all her other gifts. When he was finally picked up he was living, under another name, in a fairly shabby hotel in St. Louis, where he was getting by through selling one after another of the luxurious gadgets with which Marianne had endowed him, and courting a prosperous widow whom he was exploiting mildly, while he waited (the prosecution theory again) for the right time to move in on Marianne's cash and diamonds.

What had happened was at last, one of the in-laws, teetering on the edge of bankruptcy and casting about for succor, consulted the old lawyer, the executor of his uncle's estate, in the desperate hope that there might be some legal means, as next of kin, to extract some of that fortune from the widow who had taken it all. There was not; but in the course of discussion it became advisable to consult the widow. She was nowhere to be found, though the fact of her remarriage to one Warren Montgomery was on record.

The nephew, still racing disaster, used some of his shrinking funds to hire a priv-

ate detective. The detective, without too much trouble, located Montgomery. Montgomery was earnest, co-operative, and diplomatic. Nothing, he said, would please him better than to be able to find his missing wife; he loved her and he wanted her back. He himself had tried personals in the newspapers of all the cities where she had lived in the past, asking for information, but none had been received. (His present courtship and his present alias were waved aside as bagatelles, the result of financial necessity.)

It was at this precise moment, a year after Marianne's disappearance, when Warren Montgomery was practically off the hook, that a uranium prospector in the southwest California desert stumbled across some bones hidden in a patch of chaparral, miles from any habitation or highway.

They were the bones of a small woman, not young. They wore no clothing. The hair on the skull was dyed as Marianne's had been. There were no teeth. Marianne had had an upper and a lower plate.

How long they had lain there no doctor could tell definitely—from a year or so upward was all that could be said. Since the skeleton was naked and the teeth had been removed, this was in overwhelming probability a murder. But whose? The burden of proof rested on the state. Unfortunately for the prosecution, Marianne had never suffered a fracture. And the skeleton might have been the solution of any one of several unsolved disappearances.

The internationally reported trial which Mrs. Lila Mumpson followed so avidly, from her comfortable perch in a fashionable resort 80 miles away, lasted for 23 days. With the revelation of the defendant's past, it became a sensation. Never had the little county seat been so splendidly in the public eye. The local residents got rich renting out bed and board and selling liquor to visiting journalists and curious tourists. The county went $30,000 in debt.

Warren Montgomery could not at the moment afford a really first-class lawyer. But the one he got was adequate, for there was absolutely nothing against Montgomery except a bad reputation, an estimate of probabilities, and the circumstantial evidence of the bones. It could be proved that he and his wife had left one spot at such an hour on such a date, that he had arrived at another, alone, at such another hour and another date. It could be demonstrated that the place where the skeleton was found was roughly between one place and the other, and that it could have been reached by driving straight across the desert,

the deed done by any of half a dozen means, and the corpse abandoned, within the time required. But there was no way to prove definitely that the bones were those of Marianne Ellersby —which, of course, thanks to his penchant for bigamy, was still her legal name.

He felt supremely confident, and he made his own best and only witness.

"Do you yourself have any opinion as to whether your wife is alive or dead?" his lawyer asked him rhetorically.

His brown eyes, under their long lashes, liquid in appeal to the three hard-bitten ranch housewives who with nine small-town tradesmen and desert prospectors made up the jury, Montgomery visibly conquered the sob that arose in his throat. His soft voice trobbing, he cried:

"Oh, I do, I do! I swear to heaven I never laid a hand on her—I've always believed till now that she was still alive, but now I feel she must be dead."

"Why is that?'

"Because," cried the defendant, summoning his full organ tone, "if my little Marianne were living, if she were anywhere on earth, she would come to my help now!

"Yes, we had a big spat that day—that terrible day. She lost her temper, the first time since I'd known her, and she called me awful names. She said she was going to leave me, that she wouldn't divorce me and she'd hide herself where I never could find her. She said she'd been growing suspicious of me and now she was sure. She accused me of marrying her for her money. But she knew that wasn't true. Maybe I've deceived other women in the past—I can't deny that—but oh, I did love her! I loved her enough to say, 'If that's what you want, honey, I won't lift a finger to stop you.' And I drove her to the airport, and I handed out her bags to her, and I drove away. And from that moment I've never heard anything from or of her.

"But now there isn't a place in this country where she'd be likely to be, or in Europe either if she went back there, that hasn't run stories about this trial. Mr. Jeffries—" he gazed wet-eyed at his attorney— "I don't know any more than you or any of these ladies and gentlemen here who was that poor pitiful little creature they found out on that desert—somewhere I've never been or never seen. But if my Marianne was alive, I'd have heard from her by now. I never killed her. Oh, I know it's been brought out here, I haven't lived a good life, I've cheated, I've fooled women, I've stolen, I've broken the law—but I'm no murderer."

He broke down entirely and burst into tears.

"Oh, Marianne!" he sobbed. "If you only, only knew!"

The judge had to pound three minutes to restore order.

That was the climax, on the next-to-last day of the trial. It was a welcome diversion for the reporters, who had been trying fervently to make stories literally out of dry bones and the technicalities vouchsafed by experts concerning them. When the case went to the jury, the betting was three to one for acquittal, five to one for murder in the second degree.

The jury was out for eight hours. At ten o'clock they sent word that they had reached a decision. They sailed in, and none of them looked at Warren Montgomery.

You never can tell about juries — especially juries in little isolated towns. The verdict was murder in the first degree — which in California automatically means the death penalty.

About three days after the judge had refused Warren Montgomery a new trial, Mrs. Mumpson told Ted Hannaway that the weather was getting too hot for her. "It's been a nice vacation," she said amiably, "and it was awfully nice of you to provide such an exciting trial for me to read about while I was here!"

"I still say they didn't prove the guy guilty," said Ted Hannaway obstinately.

"I don't agree with you," snapped Mrs. Mumpson. "And it wouldn't really matter if he wasn't. Men like that, who make fools of women just to get their money away from them, deserve the worst they can get. I ought to know—I had it tried on me—once."

"So you told me," replied Ted mildly. She was a good customer, but what kind of hobby was that for a lady—murder? She looked soft, but she must be tough as leather underneath.

Mrs. Mumpson drove placidly to Los Angeles, where she sold her car and took a plane to Cleveland. She decided that this year she'd spend the summer in Maine.

There would still be reprecussions of the case that had so much interested her, so she renewed her subscription to two of the local papers and ordered them mailed to her. She was in Maine when she learned of the failure of Montgomery's first appeal. But a whole year had passed, and she was back in the penthouse apartment in Cleveland — now that she was nearly 70, she was tired of gadding about, and this, she had made up her mind, was to be her permanent *pied-a-terre* for a cozy, self-indulgent old age — when one morning, glancing through the Los Angeles newspaper to which she still subscribed, she read that, amid a welter of protest and

politics quite characteristic of public events in California, Warren Montgomery, his lawyer's last frantic efforts unsuccessful, had died in the gas chamber at San Quentin, still stubbornly asserting his innocence.

The story repeated some of the highlights of that trial in San Ambrosio, particularly the defendant's melodramatic appeal to the wife he insisted he had not murdered:

"Oh Marianne! If you only, only knew!"

Mrs. Lila Mumpson smiled as she wrote a letter closing her subscription.

"What a fool!" she murmured to herself. "Of course that was his wife's skeleton—all that theatrical folderol didn't do him a bit of good."

She sighed comfortably.

Well, the wife was a fool, too, she reflected. Thank goodness she had been smarter than that when she found out about Rick.

Nobody had ever guessed, when they had that boating accident, that he hadn't died heroically rescuing her when the boat overturned. Nobody knew she could swim and he couldn't — or that she'd shoved him while he was off balance and dumped him into the deep water before she jumped out and capsized the boat to which she had been clinging when they found her. . .

FICTION PUBLISHING COMPANY 863

30 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.

Kindly send me the issues of the SAINT circled below

One copy — 35¢; Three copies — $1.00; Six copies — $1.75

I enclose $..... in full payment, no charge for postage.

Sept. 1961	Dec. 1961	Jan. 1962	Feb. 1962
Mar. 1962	May 1962	June 1962	July 1962
Aug. 1962	Sept. 1962	Oct. 1962	Nov. 1962
Jan. 1963	Feb. 1963	Mar. 1963	April 1963
May 1963	June 1963	July 1963	

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone..... State.....

Please Print

as others see us - II

by Leslie Charteris

and Dean W. Dickensheet

Another problem with a continuing character who has gone on as long as Simon Templar is regularly raised by the readers who write to me and ask "what happened to Patricia Holm?" — and those who, almost as often, inquire similarly about Roger Conway, Monty Hayward, Hoppy Uniatz, and others. These questions are fairly embarrassing at times to an author who, like myself, regards his birth certificate as a rather quaint and obviously unreliable document, since he is often aghast at the historic events which he can remember, which make him wonder if he experienced them in previous incarnations.

This kind of probing was carried to unusual depth in an article which appeared in "the third Annish of THE SPELEOBEM, No. 13," For the enlightenment of the uninitiated, let us explain that the *Speleobem* is a species of fan magazine (abbreviated by adepts to "fanzine") — one of an astonishing number of such mimeographed publications written and produced with loving care by certain groups of far-out enthusiasts who have

---

Dean W. Dickensheet, a former technical writer who lives in San Francisco, is a library cataloguer by profession and Sherlockian by avocation "having been awarded the Irregular Shilling with the titular investiture of Vamberry the Wine Merchant." He has been married for several years to "a fire-eyed little Charteris fanatic" whom he first met at a sherlockian gathering.

---

even developed what is almost a language of their own in which to exchange views on the themes which excite them, which usually relate to the more exotic or esoteric orbits of science fiction. The *Speleobem* is put out by Bruce Pelz of Los Angeles, California; and the article, swooping to a much less abstract subject than their general run of interests, was in the form of an open letter to me from one Dean W. Dickensheet (who kindly gave us his permission to reprint it here) under the heading of

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE SAINT?

My Dear Mr. Charteris,

Perhaps the above query may seem strange, especially from a person who is well aware that the redoubtable Mr. Templar is plying his trade in the magazine which bears the name by which he is better known, and that in collections these contribute sizably to the stock-dividends of the paper-back industry. But I repeat: What *did* happen to the Saint? The recent plots are often good, but the atmosphere makes even the tawdriest of the reprints gleam by comparison. In what way does this emasculated, eviscerated, and brain-washed shadow resemble the *true* Robin Hood of Modern Crime?

Let us examine the veritable chronicles of this cavalier. Simon Templar's first recorded adventure was *Meet the Tiger*, published in September, 1928. The faithful Orace had been employed 8 years and had been wounded at Zeebrugge (1918). The events therefore took place in late 1927 or early 1928. Templar "was a man of 27." Patricia Holm's aunt had "administration of your property until you're twenty-five. That is for another fire years."

There we have it, then. This supposed supple-limbed lothario, this so-called dashing buccaneer, this fabled chameleon-like master dramatist is in reality a greying, cradle robbing sexagenarian. Patricia Holm, long since discarded, is a plump, maiden clubwoman of 53. Orace, having been retired (dismissed?) from service, has joined the ranks of the Chelsea Pensioners. Detective Inspector Carn is now an Assistant Commissioner, no doubt; Claude Eustace Teal, retired and in his seventies, is a technical advisor for BBC 'tec shows, a post filled stateside by Insp. John Fernack. Terry Mannering, Monty Hayward, Roger Conway, Dicky Tremayne, Peter Quentin, and Archie Sheridan have risen to board positions in their respective fields, have developed paunches and ulcers, and are hen-pecked by their wives. Hoppy Uniatz has become just another ex-pugilist overly available for lectures to the Police Athletic League;

Crown Prince Rudolph lives on the Riviera, a brittle ex-monarch one or another of whose mistresses publishes a memoir annually. The Saint has been pulled from his waters and lies flopping on the beach, as uncomfortable as Sherlock Holmes in World War II Washington.

I do not imagine, Mr. Charteris, that, when calling Sherlock Holmes "Victorian journalese," you "raised your umbrella to ward off the spitballs of the Baker Street Irregulars"; you actually expected one of them to toss a critical Mills bomb on your own door-step. But I do not wish my criticism to be altogether unconstructive. Let me call your attention to one of your magazine's regular contributors – Barry Perowne. Upon receiving permission from the Hornung estate to continue the adventures of A. J. Raffles, he wrote a series of novels placing Rafles and Bunny in Simon Templar's thirties. This misalignment of the Amateur Cracksman laid an egg comparable in size to that of Sinbad's Roc. Perowne thereupon began a series of Raffles stories set in the 1890's. These, as you know, have proved eminently successful, as has his resurrection of Smiler Bunn.

Please, Mr. Charteris, leave the 1960's to Peter Gunn and Inspector Gideon. Give us back *our* Saint, and Patricia, and the Halos, and the good old times. Give us back the Graustarkian Europe with its brave but inefficient police and its suave, sinister, Oxford-educated nobleman. We who have savored the scrape of the wheels of a hansom-cab will rejoice at the roar of a Furillac or a Hirondel.

I wish you, my dear sir, a long and productive career. But spare us the centenarian Saint working a swindle in Martian manglewurzels and patting the rump of a passing spaceship stewardess. Even the staunchest Upper Berkeley Mews Halo would quail at that.

Sincerely,

Dean W. Dickensheet

Not long after this was sent to me, and while I was still wondering how I should try to answer it, if at all, I received another of those "Whatever happened to Patricia" letters from Florence R. Tindall of Long Beach, California. Since I am always delighted to take any parry against such awkward questions, and also because I wondered if perchance she might suggest a good reply, I responded by sending her a copy of Mr. Dickensheet's letter.

Very promptly, she answered:

"After due reflection, I have decided to be amused by the article you sent me. However, in the interest of truth, I must tell you that I was furious at young Dickensheet. Then, I chanced

upon the happy thought that every saint has his devil's advocate and I felt better."

Not yet having the pleasure of making Mr. Dickensheet's personal acquaintance, I cannot predict whether he will feel indignant about the assumptive adjective "young"; but I would console him with the assurance that at my advanced age the word always sounds like a compliment.

Personally I was not in the least annoyed by Mr. Dicken sheet's scholarly speculation; I thought it had the makings of a delightful little essay which I only wished had been developed more fully. I can hardly think of anything more flattering to a writer than to have his fictional creation subjected to the same kind of minute dissection and extrapolation that several fanatical students have devoted to trying to establish the true characters and detailed biographies of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.

But this same prospect enjoins me from taking any constructive part in the discussions, as I am sure that Conan Doyle would similarly have declined to do. For the literal researches, there are all too many historical coordinates, which somehow my plot invention never could ignore, from which to pinpoint dates and locations in the Saint's career. Because I could never visualize him in a vacuum, a dream world with no contemporary concerns, fads, events, celebrities, songs, slang, wars, tabus, or allusions, he has always inevitably been linked with the eras during which I wrote and am still writing about him. And that, let's face it, now goes back about 35 years.

If I have refused to admit any obvious signs of age in him, it is only partly because I have taken advantage of the same poetic license which permits popular comic strip characters to remain visibly unchanged for decades, while nevertheless acting in continual contact with today's headlines, as if they existed in some miraculous fourth dimension personal only to themselves, where time marches on all around them but stands still for them. No less compelling a reason is that I myself have always suffered some of the same illusion of eternal youth. Other people seem to get older all around me, and some who started much later seem to have far outdistanced me in antiquity; but I seem to feel the same.

Mrs. Tindall gave me my best answer to Mr. Dickensheet, I think, when she concluded: "When next you meet the Saint, please tell him that I will remain, happily and permanently, under his spell, space suit and all."

I guess that goes for me too. And that's how it will have to be.

(Continued from other side)

You Get 9 Mystery Novels (WORTH $28.20 IN PUBLISHERS' EDITIONS) FOR ONLY $1.00

HERE'S a treasure chest of high-voltage mysteries at a sensational low introductory price! Now you can get Erle Stanley Gardner's seven latest Perry Mason bafflers – six individual full-length, hard-cover books – PLUS a handsome volume containing Perry's *newest* thriller, and TWO MORE top-notch mystery hits. These nine mysteries are worth $28.20 in publishers' editions – but they're YOURS for only $1.00 to introduce you to The Detective Book Club.

The Best NEW Mysteries — for LESS than 97¢ each!

Out of the 300 or more new detective books that come out every year, the Club selects the very "cream of the crop" – by outstanding authors like Erle Stanley Gardner, Agatha Christie, A. A. Fair, Mignon G. Eberhart, and John Creasey. All THESE and many other famous authors have had their books selected by the Club. Many are members themselves!

Club selections are ALL newly published books. As a member you get THREE of them complete in one handsomely-bound triple-volume (an $8.85 to $10.50 value in publishers' editions) for only $2.89.

Take ONLY the books you want

You do NOT have to take a volume every month. You receive a free copy of the Club's "Preview" which will fully describe all coming selections and you may reject any volume before or after receiving it. NO money in advance; NO membership fees. You may cancel membership any time you please.

SEND NO MONEY

Mail Postcard for ALL NINE Mysteries

Simply mail postcard promptly and we will send you at once the SEVEN Perry Mason thrillers – PLUS the two other exciting mystery hits – all described on other side. However, this exceptional offer may never be repeated. So don't risk disappointment. Mail postcard AT ONCE to:

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L.I., New York

SEND NO MONEY – JUST MAIL THIS POSTCARD 83-251

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB LS
Roslyn, L.I., New York

Please enroll me as a member and send me the SIX full-length hard-bound editions of Perry Mason thrillers, PLUS the brand-new 3-in-1 Volume Club selection containing my SEVENTH "Perry Mason" and 2 other great mystery stories. Although worth $28.20 in publishers' editions, I may keep all SEVEN books for only $1.00 (plus a few cents mailing charge) on this sensational introductory offer. If not completely satisfied after one week's examination I may return all books and owe nothing.

I am not obligated to take any specific number of books, and I am to receive advance "Previews" of all future selections. Also, I may reject any volume before or after I receive it, and I may cancel my membership whenever I wish. I need send no money now, but for each future Club triple volume I keep I will send you the low price of only $2.89 (plus a few cents mailing charge) as complete payment within a week. *(Books shipped in U.S.A. only.)*

Mr. / Mrs. / Miss .....
(PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY)

Address .....

City .....Zone....State.....

MAIL THIS POSTCARD NOW FOR YOUR NINE MYSTERIES • NO POSTAGE NEEDED

RAYMOND BURR
Famous as CBS-TV's Perry Mason

Perry Mason Fans!

Imagine $28.20 Worth of Top Mysteries (in publishers' original editions) for only $1.00 as a new member

9 GREAT MYSTERIES including SEVEN "Perry Masons" by Erle Stanley GARDNER

Yes! TAKE ALL 9 SPINE-TINGLING MYSTERIES

6 HARD-BOUND FULL-SIZE *Perry Masons*

Plus The Latest PERRY MASON and 2 More great mysteries in this giant "3-in-1" volume

Watch Perry Solve These 6 Tough Cases

1 The Case of the ICE-COLD HANDS

Perry opens the bathroom door. Marvin Freemont is *slumped* in the shower stall — bullet hole in front of his shirt — stone-cold DEAD!

2 The Case of the BLONDE BONANZA

Perry's in hot water now! The testimony to convict his client of MURDER comes from Perry's OWN investigator!

3 The Case of the RELUCTANT MODEL

Is the masterpiece a fraud? The ONE person who *knows* gets shot. Perry must risk *everything* to save a gorgeous model from death!

4 The Case of the BIGAMOUS SPOUSE

Stunning Gwynn Elston begs Perry to protect her when she nearly gulps poison . . . then SHE's nabbed for *First Degree* MURDER!

5 The Case of the SPURIOUS SPINSTER

Perry is plenty puzzled. Two spinsters disappear. But one of them is a phony — and he's got to find *her* before the REAL one *dies!*

6 The Case of the SHAPELY SHADOW

The judge wants a mistrial, favoring Perry. But Perry *doesn't* — even though it would save his client from the DEATH PENALTY!

BIG "3-in-1" Book! $9.95 in Publ. Ed.

7 The Case of the MISCHIEVOUS DOLL by Erle Stanley Gardner
Why does pretty Dorrie come to *show Perry her operation?*

8 THE UNQUIET SLEEP by William Haggard
Rachel saw the knife come up, twist suddenly. Then the sharp crack of bone...!

9 THE TARNISHED ANGEL by Hugh Pentecost
5,000 see Willard shot to death. *Why will no one identify the killer?*

Postage Will be Paid by Addressee

No Postage Stamp Necessary If Mailed in the United States

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
First Class Permit No. 47—Roslyn, N. Y.

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I.
New York

FILL IN OTHER SIDE OF CARD AND MAIL TODAY